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# An Analysis of the School Public Relations Programs in Kane County, Illinois

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206

AN ANALYSIS OF THE SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS  
PROGRAMS IN KANE COUNTY, ILLINOIS

by  
Jeffrey M. Gruber

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Education

May  
1978

## ABSTRACT

The study attempted to show the current status of public relations programs in Kane County, Illinois, in reference to relative strengths and weaknesses and general comparisons where appropriate in analysis.

The study isolated several key components of a good public relations program by using suggested guidelines from the National School Public Relations Association and elements found commonly in the literature which deal with school public relations. Current public relations programs in the school district of Kane County, Illinois, were analyzed with respect to the established criteria. The criteria used in analysis were general enough to permit a qualitative rather than a quantitative study; however, in some cases, objective analysis of statistical data such as district enrollment and the presence or absence of key program components was completed.

The author conducted interviews with the superintendents of each of the eight districts in the study. Data obtained in response to interview questions, as well as data gathered from such sources as district handbooks and established district policy were then used in analysis.

The study reached the following conclusions: 1) the quality of the programs in the study varied to a great extent; 2) districts did not place a great deal of emphasis upon public relations; 3) the problem of staffing a public

relations program needs to be addressed and, in general, is not being done; 4) no evidence of formal planning or program evaluation was found in any of the eight districts in the study; 5) most districts effectively use the local media which is available to them; 6) good two-way communication was found in most districts and 7) in each district the one individual responsible for the implementation of adequate public relations was the chief school officer, the superintendent.

Districts need to place a higher priority upon communicating with the community. Long-range planning which takes advantage of sound business practices in public relations needs to be implemented. In general, school officials need to place more emphasis upon sound practices of two-way communication. Solutions to such problems are often obvious; however, many school officials are not able to recognize an inadequate communications program as a potential dangerous problem. ✓

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Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Mary Jane, who with professional skill, has typed the study and, who, with her continued patience and support the past four years, has made graduate study a realistic goal.

## VITA

Jeffrey Michael Gruber was born in Melrose Park, Illinois, on September 20, 1947.

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From 1970 to 1974 the writer taught at St. James the Apostle Elementary School in Glen Ellyn, Illinois. During 1975, the writer served as an administrative intern in Woodridge, Illinois, while enrolled in the doctoral program in School Administration and Supervision at Loyola University, Chicago. He was assistant principal of Monroe Junior High School in Wheaton, Illinois, from 1975 to 1977. In 1978 he was appointed Director of Title I Programs for Wheaton District 200. He also continued to serve as part-time assistant principal at Monroe Junior High School.

He was married on June 1, 1968, to Mary Jane Wall. They have three childre, Elizabeth Ann, Jennifer, and Michael Jeffrey. Current residence is St. Charles, Illinois.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
A. Statement of the Purpose . . . . .	1
B. Justification. . . . .	1
C. The procedure. . . . .	2
D. Definition of terms. . . . .	6
E. Limitations. . . . .	8
II. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE . . . . .	10
A. Relating school programs to the community. . . . .	10
B. The influence of Arthur Moehlman . . . . .	18
C. Public relations policy. . . . .	20
D. Management of the public relations program . . . . .	22
E. Elements of the communications process . . . . .	25
F. Evaluation of the program. . . . .	30
G. The role of pupils and parents in the prog.. . . .	31
H. Staff involvement in the school program. . . . .	33
I. Community groups . . . . .	34
J. The press. . . . .	35
K. Radio and television . . . . .	37
L. School publications. . . . .	38
M. Related studies in the field of public relations. . . . .	39
III. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA. . . . .	42
A. A general overview of the Fox Valley . . . . .	42
B. District I . . . . .	44
C. District II. . . . .	56
D. District III . . . . .	64
E. District IV. . . . .	73
F. District V . . . . .	81
G. District VI. . . . .	91
H. District VII . . . . .	100
I. District VIII. . . . .	108
J. Budget considerations. . . . .	116
IV. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS - PROGRAM QUALITY. . . . .	118
A. Critical Components. . . . .	119
B. Strengths and weaknesses . . . . .	129
C. Tendencies and pitfalls. . . . .	144
V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS. . . . .	148
A. Conclusions. . . . .	148
B. Recommendations. . . . .	152



	Page
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	157, 158
APPENDICES . . . . .	159
I. Participating Districts. . . . .	160
II. Questionnaire. . . . .	161

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
I. A SUMMARY OF DISTRICT I PUBLIC RELATIONS COMPONENTS . . . . .	55
II. A SUMMARY OF DISTRICT II PUBLIC RELATIONS COMPONENTS . . . . .	63
III. A SUMMARY OF DISTRICT III PUBLIC RELATIONS COMPONENTS . . . . .	72
IV. A SUMMARY OF DISTRICT IV PUBLIC RELATIONS COMPONENTS . . . . .	80
V. A SUMMARY OF DISTRICT V PUBLIC RELATIONS COMPONENTS . . . . .	90
VI. A SUMMARY OF DISTRICT VI PUBLIC RELATIONS COMPONENTS . . . . .	99
VII. A SUMMARY OF DISTRICT VII PUBLIC RELATIONS COMPONENTS . . . . .	107
VIII. A SUMMARY OF DISTRICT VIII PUBLIC RELATIONS COMPONENTS . . . . .	115
IX. PERCENTAGE OF DISTRICTS POSSESSING PUBLIC RELATIONS COMPONENTS . . . . .	121
X. PERCENTAGE OF DISTRICTS POSSESSING PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM CRITICAL COMPONENTS. . . .	122
XI. DISTRICT SUMMARY OF CRITICAL COMPONENTS. . .	123

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### The Purpose

The purpose of the study is to analyze the current public relations programs in the school districts of Kane County, Illinois. The study isolates the components of a school public relations program and compares these with existing programs (please see Appendix A for a list of the participating districts). A qualitative, rather than a quantitative approach to the data will be emphasized; that is, the criteria used in analysis are general enough to permit qualitative comparisons of districts which may have very limited public relations programs. In some cases, objective analysis of statistical data such as district size, number of schools, etc. will be made. In addition, the questions used to structure the interview process were made general enough to permit a variety of responses rather than a simple yes or no response to a series of questions. Such an objective questionnaire would be easy to analyze from a statistical point of view, but would reveal very little meaningful analysis.

#### Justification

The study will serve a utilitarian purpose for each

of the participating districts. The analysis will show where each district is strong or weak and the reasons for this. Each district can compare themselves to their neighboring school districts in the Fox Valley.

Kane County has been chosen because this area represents a very diverse group of school districts. This diversity is desirable for the study in order to show what may or may not be considered strong programs in districts of various enrollments. In addition, Kane County has several districts which are close in size (Aurora East, Aurora West, St. Charles and Kaneland). The diversity in the study is represented by Elgin, a school district of approximately 26,000 students and the third largest school district in Illinois, and Central Community, a school district of about 1,100 students.

#### The Procedure

A letter of introduction was sent to each superintendent in Kane County, Illinois. The letter requested a personal interview and outlined the purpose of the interview. Approximately one week later, each of the superintendents was contacted by telephone and personal appointments were made with the superintendents of Kane County.

Each interview was structured around a series of questions (see Appendix B) which were largely developed from the National School Public Relations Association's suggested guidelines. In addition, each superintendent

was asked to assess the current status of his district's public relations program. In each case, the following documents were sought and subsequently used as data in the analysis portion of the study: 1) a written policy statement regarding the public relations program, 2) the relative position of the public relations professional on the line and staff statement, 3) a budget document showing the district's financial position related to the public relations program, 4) written procedures which outline internal and external communications in the school district, 5) an evaluation tool or tools, 6) community surveys used, 7) district newsletters, 8) employee orientation information, 9) a general staff handbook, and 10) community newsletters issued from the district central office.

Chapter II contains a review of the related research. Chapter III is a presentation and an analysis of the data which were collected in each district of Kane County, Illinois. The first part of this Chapter presents the data collected district by district, in modified case study form. The second part of Chapter 3 deals with the analysis of the data. The data which were collected are compared to criteria as determined from a review of the literature. The criteria listed below were determined through a review of some of the major texts in the field of school public relations. Analysis using criteria shows similarities and differences which exist in the programs in the study. Significant patterns and trends as well as possible pitfalls are discussed

in analysis. Each district program is analyzed with respect to the absence or presence of the established criteria and the subsequent significance of this. This portion of the chapter is structured so that each district is analyzed, one at a time.

The criteria which were used, follow:

- A. Existence of a written policy for public relations approved by the local board of education
- B. Program goals and objectives with established strategies to achieve the stated goals and objectives
- C. Employment of a full or part-time public relations professional
- D. Management of the program as evidenced by:
  - 1. planning of the program
  - 2. strategies which are based upon identified needs
- E. The use of evaluation through some or all of the following methods:
  - 1. observations
  - 2. records
  - 3. telephone surveys
  - 4. questionnaires
  - 5. checklists
  - 6. rating scales
  - 7. opinion polls

Two-way communication is taking place

1. with community groups
2. with parents
3. with staff
4. with pupils
5. with the local school board of education

G. Group participation

1. with pupils
2. with staff advisory groups
3. with parents groups such as the P.T.A.
4. with community advisory groups

H. The presence of service programs for:

1. receiving school visitors
2. telephone calls and correspondence
3. handling complaints
4. requests for information
5. open house
6. community use of school facilities
7. adult education

I. Use of the local press

J. Use of radio in the public relations program

K. Use of television in the public relations program

L. The use of publications such as:

1. student handbooks
2. school and district papers
3. bulletins
4. yearbooks

5. annual report
6. curriculum objectives and policies
7. school survey reports

Chapter IV compares the district programs with one another. The analyses in this chapter are concerned with the trends, patterns, similarities, and differences found in the districts studied when each district is compared, one at a time, with each of the other districts in the study. The chapter is structured so that the criteria A - L, and how each district measures up to it, are considered in progressive order. The districts are analyzed as to their relationship to criterion A, then to criterion B, and so on until all the criteria have been discussed.

Possible explanations for the apparent success of some of the districts in certain areas of their public relations programs are considered. In each case, program success or failure is determined by observing the extent to which stated goals and objectives are achieved (criterion B) in each district. When this factor is combined with the breadth or scope of each program, some evaluation of how effective each program is will have been determined.

Chapter V presents the recommendations of the study. This final chapter summarizes the findings of the study.

#### Definition of Terms

For purposes of the study, school public relations shall be defined as "... a planned and systematic two-way



process of communications between a school system and its internal and external publics."<sup>1</sup> School public relations will be used in the study to refer to the program the selected districts use to communicate with their particular community. The program serves to stimulate a better understanding of the role, objectives, accomplishments, and needs of the organization. Actually, the term public relations refers to a management function which interprets public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual organization with the public interest, and builds a program which encourages public involvement and seeks to earn the respect and understanding of that public. In other words, public relations is a multi-faceted term which, as used in this study, describes a process, not a product or a program.

The community is another important term which requires definition. The community refers to the local publics with which the school district must maintain the two-way process of communication described above. The term community, when used in the study will encompass the following groups: the local board of education, students, staff, alumni, educational institutions, educational associations, related governmental bodies, private schools, P.T.A. members, school-oriented community organizations,

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<sup>1</sup>Don Bagin, How To Start and Improve a Public Relations Program, (Evanston, Illinois, National School Board Association, 1975), p. 7.

parents, non-parents, private school parents, preschool parents, cultural organizations, ethnic group organizations, fraternal organizations, industrial and trade organizations, religious organizations, social clubs, occupational clubs, and institutes. This extensive listing of community groups indicates the scope of a good public relations program.

The term guidelines is used in reference to the public relations program described by the National School Public Relations Association and those other sources which I will allude to which were consulted in constructing the guidelines used in this study. These guidelines have been translated into a questionnaire which will be used to interview the superintendents of the participating districts.

### Limitations

The study examines district public relations programs as opposed to individual school programs. This is significant because much of the actual program will emanate from individual schools. A clearer, more easily definable picture of the structure of the program will be seen by limiting the study to the district level.

In addition, the grade span of the educational programs in the study is kindergarten through the twelfth grade. Any consideration of higher education is excluded from the study. While there are a great many similarities in the public relations program at any level, it is believed that there are significant differences which would possibly in-

validate any conclusions made that were based upon so broad an undertaking.

The study is limited by geographical area. Only school districts of Kane County, Illinois, are included in the study. General conclusions can be drawn from the study; however, it is acknowledged that the quality of public relations programs will vary significantly from one district to the next, and because of this, the information alluded to in the study cannot be equally applied to other districts in or out of the State of Illinois.

The study may not be applicable to a large diversity of school districts, although it is hoped that it will prove to be generally applicable. The study reflects only the data gathered from the participating school districts and should not be construed to represent all school districts which may or may not have public relations programs as described in the study.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

#### Relating School Programs to the Community

"If there was ever a truism in school public relations, it is that citizens know less about their schools than educators think they do."<sup>1</sup> These words, spoken by Robert Byrne in 1976 are not only true for the present, but can equally apply to the recent past. Despite this condition, little has been done to improve communications between the schools and their public. This seems to be true simply because very little attention has been focused upon the area of public communications by the schools. For those with chosen professions in public schooling, people such as teachers and, especially administrators, there have always been other things which demanded the attention of their efforts.

Gene Fusco has outlined the background of school-community relations in a text entitled, Improving Your School-Community Relations Program.<sup>2</sup> School publicity

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Byrne, Edward Powell, Strengthening School-Community Relations, (Reston, Virginia, National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1976), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Gene C. Fusco, Improving Your School-Community Relations Program, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967), p. 10.

campaigns came onto the scene around the turn of the century. This, then, gave way to continuous publicity programs during the 1920's. The thirty's and forty's saw programs which revolved around the idea of "educational interpretation". The late 1940's saw school and community interaction thru citizenship participation. This was called school-community cooperation, school-community partnership, or the term we often see used today, school-community relations.

In 1972, Glen Wegner, superintendent of schools in Lamper, California, stated:

It is absolutely imperative that school systems not be defensive. They must report with candor to their communities and attempt to establish procedures whereby they can intelligently carry on meaningful dialogues. Avenues should be established for the purpose of soliciting responses from the community in order that realistic viewpoints are reached concerning issues.<sup>3</sup>

It is these avenues which Wegner refers to which form the structure of the good public relations program. These avenues of communication must not only be clearly developed in a good program, but once present, they should be utilized to give the community the kind of information it desires. Some of this information will include such things as the educational goals and objectives of the system, the role of education in the society of the future, the degree of educational opportunity for all pupils, educational accom-

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<sup>3</sup>Thomas Alva Edison Foundation, The Elements To Better School-Community Relations, (Melbourne, Florida, Institute For the Development of Educational Activities, Inc., 1972), p. 19.

plishments, instructional technology, long range financial and curriculum planning, current and long range school construction plans, counseling and other specialized pupil services, and the relationship of the past, present, and future in school development.<sup>4</sup>

In most instances, school public relation programs which include some of these suggested guidelines and structures play an important role in the administration of the successful public school program. This area, however, has been one where very little expertise has been developed over the past five decades. Instead, educators have focused their attention on budget, curriculum, scheduling, staffing, etc., at the expense of keeping the community properly informed. Actually, keeping the local community properly informed plays an important role in developing community trust for the total program. In a study done by Gerald Pinson in 1967, he found the following common ailments: too little attention given to public relations programs, few schools had a specialized person to deal with public relations, few districts public an annual report to their community, few patrons attended board meetings, and few programs had long range planning in writing.<sup>5</sup>

Good public relations operates on the premise that

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<sup>4</sup>Fusco, p. 14.

<sup>5</sup>Gerald W. Pinson, Current Trends and Practices In School Public Relations, (East Texas School Study Council, March, 1967), p. 44.

the public has a right to know. Having a good product precedes trying to sell it to the public. The aim of any good program must be public understanding of what is taking place in the schools. Good public relations is a learned craft; that is some do it better than others.<sup>6</sup>

Kindred describes the National Assessment of Educational Progress, which is an organization begun in 1964 and financed by the Carnegie Corporation of New York City, the United State Office of Education, and the Ford Foundation.<sup>7</sup> The National Assessment of Educational Progress is designed to make available to the public censuslike data on the educational attainments of selected groups of American youth, and to measure any growth or decline that takes place in selected aspects of those attainments over given periods of time. Americans, today more than at any time in the past, are expressing concern over what their children are learning or not learning in school. Schools are, consequently, being asked to be accountable for student achievement. For this reason, accountability programs such as performance contracting came to the public's attention during the 1960's.

One of the first programs that used performance contracting was implemented in Texarkana, Arkansas, by a

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<sup>6</sup>Gloria Dapper, Public Relations For Educators, (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1964), p. 2.

<sup>7</sup>Leslie Kindred, Don Bagin, Donald R. Gallagher, The School and Community Relations, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976), p. 16.

private firm under the name of Dorsett Educational Systems. Each pupil was to gain a grade level in reading and arithmetic after eighty hours of instruction at a cost of \$80 per pupil, plus a bonus for faster performance. In some instances, pupils showed remarkable learning growth under such performance contracting systems; however, for the most part, this approach did not succeed and exited the educational scene during the early 1970's.

Another clue that the public desires more information about the schools can be seen in the tremendous amount of student activism and unrest during the 1960's. As a result of this, school officials did in many instances develop more effective vehicles of communication for students and parents.

Currently, public interest in education remains at a more active level than at any time in the past. To a very large degree, the public has an almost blind faith in public education. High interest is basically a result of the increasingly larger sums of public tax dollars that are being spent on public education. Gordon McCloskey states that, "Educational values and needs must be presented to citizens in clear, easily understood terms."<sup>8</sup> Educators must recognize the immense communication problems involved in doing that. Public education must work to create a public understanding which will result in moral and financial support

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<sup>8</sup>Gordon McCloskey, Education and Public Understanding, (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1959), p. 24.



sufficient to provide high quality education for the nation's children and youth. There are several obstacles which must be overcome to achieve this goal. The results of education are intangible; that is, the product of education is so complex that it is very difficult to measure. This presents problems in terms of accountability to the public. The benefits of the educational process are indirect to the adult. There isn't a clear cause-effect relationship that exists between the formal educational process and achievements in society. The most commonly recognized educational benefits are remote.<sup>9</sup> In terms of public relations, it is difficult to involve the public in the educational process to the degree that they will not require tangible, measurable results.

Leslie Kindred describes additional objectives of the educational process: 1) to determine how the public feels about the school and what it wishes the school to accomplish, 2) to secure adequate financial support for a sound educational program, 3) to help citizens feel a more direct responsibility for the quality the school provides, 4) to gain the good will, respect, and confidence of the public in professional personnel and services of the institution, and 5) to promote a genuine spirit of cooperation between the school and community in sharing leadership for the im-

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

provement of community life.<sup>10</sup>

Kindred remarks,

Despite the growing intervention of the federal government in local and state education affairs, it is evident in the legal structure of the state school system and in the laws regulating its operation that the power to manage schools actually resides in the people.<sup>11</sup>

Ira Wilder would concur with Kindred on this subject. Wilder remarks, "The public determines the amount of control our schools will have."<sup>12</sup> She states further, "No public school has any moral right to allow itself to be unexplained, misunderstood, or publicly distrusted."<sup>13</sup>

James Cass, in an article in Education Digest, points out the following facts: 1) only one-third of the adult public knows that school boards establish overall school policy but do not administer schools on a day-to-day basis; 2) only 38% of the public is aware that school boards are representing the people; 3) only 42% of the public believe that when disputes arise, the school board acts in the best interests of the students rather than in the interests of teacher unions, administrators, etc..<sup>14</sup> There is a growing need

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<sup>10</sup>Leslie Kindred, School Public Relations, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1957), p. 23.

<sup>11</sup>Kindred, Community Relations, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup>Ira Wilder, Clearing House, "Public Relations For Today's School," (Farleigh Dickinson University, New Jersey, May, 1970), p. 537.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 537.

<sup>14</sup>James Cass, Education Digest, "Who Runs the Schools?" (Prakken Publications, Michigan, October, 1975), p. 14.

for the public to be informed regarding school affairs. As the above figures show, in the face of a lack of information, the public tends to assume beliefs which are often false and dangerous for the well-being of the public school system. Despite this, it must be remembered that the public schools are under the direct control of the local community.

The laws of the state imply a partnership must exist between the local community and the professionals which are hired to direct the school system. This partnership between professionals and citizens should have as its goal the planning of school programs and the betterment of educational practices.<sup>15</sup>

Merle Sumption, while discussing this subject in his book entitled School-Community Relations states,

It (federal and state law) regards each individual in the school-community as a part owner of an educational venture. He is a shareholder by virtue of the fact that he pays taxes to support education in his community.<sup>16</sup>

The payoff for the public school can't be measured in dollars and cents, but, rather, must be evaluated in terms of human resources. The product of a good educational system is a better qualified graduate who will then contribute to his society in a meaningful and beneficial way.

The public relations minded school person approaches

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<sup>15</sup>Kindred, Community Relations, p. 13.

<sup>16</sup>Merle R. Sumption, Yvonne Egstrom, School-Community Relations, (New York, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966), p. 2.

the problem of community involvement with the knowledge that the taxpayer is more than the custodian of the school. Doyle Bortner describes public relations as,

...an operation which helps schools know their communities in order that they may not only serve educational needs but also select more intelligently the media and activities which will keep the people informed about the schools, their purposes, programs, progress, and problems.<sup>17</sup>

M. Scott Norton makes reference to the effort of school officials in the area of public relations. "The overwhelming majority of school systems in the nation have not implemented a planned program of public relations."<sup>18</sup> Norton outlines several recommendations for action: 1) pre-service and inservice education of teachers and administrators, and 2) public relations in the schools as a systems consideration including a) program objectives, b) identification of professionals, and c) coordination of resources.<sup>19</sup>

#### The Influence of Arthur Moehlman

One of the most prominent figures in the field of school public relations has been Arthur Moehlman. In a text entitled Social Interpretation written in 1938, Moehlman actually spelled out many of the principles of school public

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<sup>17</sup> Doyle Bortner, Public Relations For Teachers, (New York, Simmons-Boardman, 1959), p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> M. Scott Norton, Clearing House, "School-Community Relations: New Issues, New Needs," (Farleigh Dickinson University, New Jersey, May, 1970), p. 538.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 538.

relations. Moehlman believed very strongly that democracy has a tremendous effect upon all social institutions. He saw this as very important to public schools because, "...So long as democratic organization exists, it is essential that the process of keeping the people informed of institutional worth be continued."<sup>20</sup> He termed this process "social interpretation," and much of what he then said in 1938 still applies today. Social interpretation was subsequently defined as "...those institutional activities which keep the institution aware of community opinion and needs and keep the people informed of the purpose, value, conditions, and needs of public education."<sup>21</sup>

Moehlman believed that democratic institutions (such as public education), exist at the pleasure of the people. Their reason for existence was simply to serve the functional purpose for which they were created. He outlined several important principles of institutional interpretation. All of these principles directly apply to the public relations portion of the educational programs which will be discussed in this study.

One of these principles deals with the relationship between the institution and the public. Moehlman pointed out that democratic social institutions rest upon public

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<sup>20</sup> Arthur B. Moehlman, Social Interpretation, (New York, D. Appleton-Century Company, 1938), p. 12.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

confidence which depends ultimately upon the honesty and sincerity of the institution itself. Moehlman correctly perceived that the educational institution could not rise above the confidence and understanding of the public. If it did, it would destroy the popular concept upon which it was created. Informational material must be adjusted to the interest and intelligence of what he termed a "culturally complex adult audience."<sup>22</sup>

In addition, the public school as an impartial democratic agency operates on the central tendency in public opinion, leaving itself susceptible to the criticisms of reactionary and radical opinion. Arthur Moehlman understood public relations in 1936 as well as anyone does today, nearly forty years later. He addressed himself to the process and not the specific program. A thorough understanding of the process as described by Moehlman, is necessary in order to correctly understand and interpret what one finds when school public relations programs are investigated.

#### Public Relations Policy

The National School Public Relations Association recommends certain provisions be included in any good public relations program. These provisions begin with a clear statement of the purposes of the public relations program. This should appear as a policy which has been adopted by

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

the local board of education.

The policy should include: 1) the reasons for adopting the policy; 2) the decision to do something or take some form of action for the reasons stated; 3) the general means to be employed in carrying out the decision; 4) the delegation of authority by the board of education to the superintendent in order to develop a workable program; 5) the responsibility of other employees for promoting good community relations.<sup>23</sup> The policy should be printed with copies available for all members of the staff and for any resident of the community.

Policy will generally follow one of four styles:

1) broad discretionary powers are left to the administration; 2) a policy which includes the rationale or purposes for the decision and the aspects, parameters, or limits within which the program is to be designed; 3) rules and regulations or procedures are attached to the policy statement and they become an integral part of the policy; 4) a resolution on which the board takes legal action.

Kindred notes that legally adopted policy compels action and eliminates hesitancy about requesting the manpower and materials it calls for. The principles of a good public relations program should be reviewed in the policy statement. These principles include: 1) integrity; 2) continuity; 3) coverage; 4) simplicity; 5) constructiveness;

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<sup>23</sup>Kindred, Community Relations, p. 28.

6) adaptability to the community it serves and 7) flexibility.<sup>24</sup>

#### Management of the Public Relations Program

Management of the public relations program begins with the identification of the goals and objectives of the program. Sumption and Engstrom identify several objectives: 1) to provide the people with information about their schools; 2) to provide the schools with information about the local community; 3) to establish and maintain confidence in the schools; 4) to secure community support for the school and its program; 5) to develop a commonality of purpose, effort and achievement; 6) to develop in the community a recognition of the vital importance of education in our social and economic life; 7) keeping the people informed of new developments and trends in education; 8) to develop through a continuous exchange of information an atmosphere of cooperation between the school and the other social institutions of the community; 9) to secure an unofficial but frank evaluation of the program of the school in terms of educational needs as to the community sees them; 10) to develop public good will towards the school.<sup>25</sup>

As described, these program objectives must be both long range and short range. The objectives must consider

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<sup>24</sup>Kindred, Public Relations, p. 74.

<sup>25</sup>Sumption, p. 105.



what the public needs to know. This information will vary from one community to the next. There will be some information which almost any community will want to know. Such information as discipline and finances have consistently appeared high on the list of priorities in public opinion surveys. In addition, local programs must account for what is most likely to be misunderstood and misrepresented.<sup>26</sup>

Byrne and Powell suggest some essential elements which must be considered in planning an effective program for public relations.<sup>27</sup> Planning and program must involve everyone in the system. The more people who actually have a commitment to the program, the more successful the program is likely to be. Byrne emphasizes the fact that citizens and staff usually know less about the schools than administrators think they do. The program will require constant monitoring or evaluation. Feedback from all available sources must be sought at each step. Finally, an assessment of the community power structure must be successfully accomplished in order that the resources (time, money and personnel) are channeled in the right directions.

Byrne and Powell give several reasons to explain why some public relations programs fail.<sup>28</sup> Administrators usu-

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<sup>26</sup>McCloskey, p. 213.

<sup>27</sup>Robert Byrne, Edward Powell, Education Digest, "Planning School-Community Relations," (Prakken Publications, Michigan, November, 1976), pp. 52-55.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 54.

ally will receive very little training in this area. Consequently, there are very few people in administrative positions who have the training and expertise to implement successful programs. Resistance among the teaching staff is also cited as a major cause of failure by the authors. Finally, criticisms from the social milieu will cause public relations programs to fail. This is often true simply because the public relations program is not made visible to the community. The people cannot see what is being done so they assume that there is nothing of value in the program. A public relations program cannot afford to assume a low profile. The program must be both visible and accountable to the community.

Kindred, Bagin, and Gallagher describe a planning process which they term "correctional planning".<sup>29</sup> The first step is to consider the sociological inventory, analyze the power structure, and measure the prevailing opinions and beliefs of various special publics regarding the schools and the educational program. Once these needs have been revealed, they should be put in writing. Modification of goals are the final steps in the correctional planning process.

Management by objectives can be an example of the correctional planning process. Odioive defines management by objectives as:

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<sup>29</sup> Kindred, Community Relations, p. 59.

...a process whereby the supervisor and subordinate managers of an organization jointly identify its common goals, define each individual's major areas of responsibility in terms of the results expected of him, and use these measures as guides for operating the unit and assessing the contribution of each of its members.<sup>30</sup>

Some of the advantages of this planning strategy are: 1) management by objectives creates an open, problem solving climate; 2) greater participation in the achievement of organizational goals can be realized; 3) a stronger sense of good supervisor-subordinate relationships is achieved; 4) an improvement in individual performance because the goals are clearly understood, and 5) more effective communication among individuals and between groups can take place.

Some of the disadvantages of management by objectives are: 1) in order to be successful, the program requires a strong commitment to the system by everyone involved in the process; 2) the process must be taught and usually takes at least two years to fully implement; 3) real skill is involved in the stating of specific performance objectives and budgets, and 4) individuals can be evaluated in terms of personality rather than achievement.

#### Elements of the Communication Process

The word "communicate" is derived from the Latin "communis" meaning "to share, to make common." Wilbur Schramm defines communicate as "...an effort to establish

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

a "commonness" with another person or group by sharing information, ideas, or attitudes."<sup>31</sup> Two-way communication is the most effective; unfortunately, much of the communication that takes place in schools is one-way communication. Two-way communication provides each participant with an immediate feedback of information which can be used to evaluate the process as it is taking place. One-way communication requires that this be done through another method of operation. The idea of feedback is very important to the process of communication. McCloskey emphasizes that "...careful observation and interpretation of feedback greatly increases the accuracy and effectiveness of communication."<sup>32</sup>

Several factors which can impede the communication process are: 1) vague or inaccurate information; 2) the message may be encoded poorly; 3) the message may be transmitted poorly, and 4) the receiver may decode the message other than as you had intended him to do so.<sup>33</sup>

Many authors including Leslie Kindred, often use the terms "internal" and "external" communications in reference to a public relations program. Internal communications refers to what is done within the district to

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<sup>31</sup> McCloskey, p. 59.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

promote a good program. This includes, perhaps more importantly than anything else, the involvement of staff. Robert Byrne cites two major obstacles to community relations which apply to this portion of the program.<sup>34</sup> The first of these is the reluctance among administrators to become involved in the effort needed to promote a good program. This stems largely from the fact that most school administrators have had inadequate training in this area and are usually faced with problems, which, because of their crucial or serious nature, require their immediate attention. The second obstacle to program implementation is the resistance found in the teaching staff. It is vital to involve staff and procedures for what information will be supplied to staff (newsletters, handbooks, orientation materials) should be made and put in writing. Internal communications should also include solid in-service programs which can cover such things as referendums, programs, and special events.

One should also find written procedures for the external communications of a good public relations program. These are usually groups with whom continuous communication is maintained. This is what was earlier referred to as the "community."

The communication process can be analyzed by describing each component of the process as: 1) source; 2) encoder;

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<sup>34</sup>Robert Byrne, Edward Powell, Strengthening School-Community Relations, (Reston Virginia, National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1976), p. 15.

3) channel; 4) decoder, and 5) receiver.<sup>35</sup> The originator of the process, the source, is the crucial element to effective communication. Confidence in the source will determine how much persuasion the source can exert in delivering the message. This process can be clearly seen in the case of the amount of persuasiveness a doctor or a lawyer can exert simply because they have the confidence of their patient or client.

Three major interest levels can be described with respect to the school: 1) those very interested in the school such as members of parent-teacher associations; 2) those who show interest in the schools only on occasion, and 3) those who seldom exhibit any concern for the schools.<sup>36</sup> Public relations programs must develop effective channels of communication to each of these levels.

Max Rosenberg, in an article entitled "Community Relations: Approaches Educators Use," describes the process from the schools point-of-view.<sup>37</sup> Rosenberg describes the process from three possible perspectives. The first of these perspectives does very little to communicate. The feeling here is that the public as the laymen simply wouldn't be able to understand what the "sharp pro" is doing. The

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<sup>35</sup> Kindred, Community Relations, p. 75.

<sup>36</sup> Sumption, p. 108.

<sup>37</sup> Max Rosenberg, Clearing House, "Community Relations: Approaches Educators Use," (Farleigh Dickinson University, New Jersey), pp. 50-53.

second level uses a public relations approach where the objective is to keep the community well-informed. The last level is the most effective type of communication. Rosenberg terms this level "community relations" because educators and community form a partnership at this level. Here, the need for joint participation is achieved as the school deals with the community on a person-to-person basis.

Jerry J. Herman describes the Lewiston-Porter Central School District of Youngstown, New York, as a school system which effectively and successfully planned and implemented a sound approach to the communications problem.<sup>38</sup> Herman describes the process as one of total involvement. Attitudinal surveys were sent to all the residents of the community. Next, a speaker's bureau was established which consisted of staff to serve as speakers and resource people for the community. This was an example of good two-way communication in action. The community was given a phone number to call if they had learned via rumor of some particular news. Booster groups, such as music and athletic groups, were utilized in the process. Resident volunteers were involved in the plan in any way that they could be of some assistance. Citizens committees and subcommittees were established in order to utilize the particular knowledge and expertise of the community. Finally, various sources

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<sup>38</sup> Jerry J. Herman, Clearing House, "Communications: The Systems are All Go," (Farleigh Dickinson University, New Jersey, February, 1972), pp. 370-375.

of communication were activated such as the local radio station, the local newspapers, and the district newsletter. This kind of total community involvement provided the foundation necessary to present a successful communications program.

### Evaluation of the Program

Evaluation should present and provide an on-going means for the measurement of the growth of the program. Staff should be included in this process. Staff members (teachers and administrators) can provide input that is realistic and practical and often suggest ideas that may be overlooked. More importantly, staff involvement will strengthen the organizational structure, and thereby make events, policies, and practices more predictable.

Evaluation is the least developed area in school and community relations programs. Conventionally, there are several sources which can be used in the evaluation process: 1) observations which can be done by staff, pupils, parents, newspapers and other community agencies; 2) records such as reports written by staff; 3) telephone surveys; 4) a panel of laymen can periodically schedule interviews or ask for opinions; 5) questionnaires; 6) check-lists; 7) rating scales, and 8) opinion polls using direct interviews with a stratified sample of the local community.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Kindred, Community Relations, p. 90.



Kindred describes what is termed an accomplishment audit.<sup>40</sup> This process includes defining goals and objectives in quantifiable, measurable terms. After this is done, situations where these objectives may be exhibited are sought. Once the situations are identified, data is secured for each objective. Finally, the results are interpreted and publicized.

#### The Role of Pupils and Parents in the Program

Donald Schaub, in an article entitled "A Lesson In Communication" emphasizes the idea of total community involvement.<sup>41</sup> To a large extent, this will mean parent involvement. Involving parents in school programs in a meaningful way helps to provide the kind of community support that a school program requires. George T. Frey describes a program of parent involvement.<sup>42</sup> The program evolved at O'Farrell Junior High School in San Diego, California, in 1968. A survey was used to assess the needs of the area. Next, school staff met with parents in small groups in each feeder area of the school to explain their programs and answer the questions of the parents. Community

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>41</sup>Donald W. Schaub, Education Digest, "A Lesson In Communication," (Prakken Publications, Michigan, September, 1975), pp. 2-5.

<sup>42</sup>George T. Frey, Today's Education, "Improving School-Community Relations," (National Education Association, Washington, D.C., January, 1971), pp. 14-17.

involvement in the process was very successful. Advisory committees were established to work with the school on an on-going basis. In summary, more parent contact was initiated and continued. This was done at the request of the parents. Parents continually made the request that they be contacted more often.

Programs that bring parents into the school are generally successful programs. Parent conferences, personal invitations, and visitation are the kinds of methods which can be utilized to involve parents in the school program. Parents can be a valuable resource to the program and should be used in curriculum planning and special class presentations.<sup>43</sup>

Pupils must be involved in the school program. Communicating with pupils must begin in the classroom. A satisfactory relationship built upon consistent rules and respect will provide a solid foundation. Students must be aware of what is expected of them while they are at school. A code of conduct should be published periodically and given to all students. In addition, students should be allowed to become actively involved in the educational process by providing vehicles such as student councils and student advisory committees. Student involvement in the school program should extend beyond the school to the com-

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<sup>43</sup>Bortner, p. 12.

munity. Programs which encourage this kind of involvement are to be sought.<sup>44</sup>

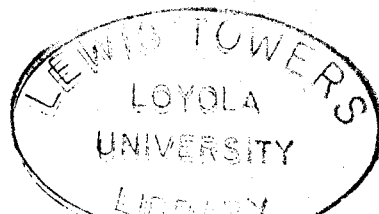
#### Staff Involvement in the School Program

A primary goal of a good program will be to develop strong relationships with the teaching staff. Instructional practices should be guided by a definite statement of the philosophy and objectives of teaching. Teacher groups, which began to exert themselves during the 1960's, did so for some reasons which can be easily identified: 1) a desire for improved economic and working conditions; 2) a desire for more control over contracts which would determine working conditions; 3) a desire to communicate with all levels of the administration, and 4) more influence on legislation in the field of education.<sup>45</sup> The 1960's saw a big influx of young, male teachers. Fewer of these teachers left the field in the ensuing years which meant a greater career commitment among the teaching profession, consequently, teachers wished to become involved in the decision-making process.

The teaching staff of the school program should be the primary means of communicating with the public. As with pupils and parents, teachers should be involved in the school program in any way possible. Curriculum committees and staff advisory councils should be formed as the need

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 136.



arises. Avenues of communication between the staff and the community should be provided.

### Community Groups

In an article entitled "Schools And Communities: A Necessary Relevance," Ronald Jackson stresses the need for greater community participation in school affairs.<sup>46</sup> Jackson says that America has changed and that society looks to other things as important. He implies a shift in values during the last twenty-five years. Teachers have become more detached from the community. Many school buildings are not used by the community in the evening or during the summer months when school buildings stand vacant for long periods of time. This condition is symptomatic of the American community.

McCloskey divides the community into formal groups.<sup>47</sup> Some of these formal groups are: exclusive club memberships, social organizations, professional organizational memberships, civic organizations, labor organizations, cultural organizations, ethnic group organizations, fraternal organizations, and industrial and trade organizations. These organizations form the power structure of the community which must be identified in the public relations program.

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<sup>46</sup> Ronald B. Jackson, Clearing House, "Schools and Communities: A Necessary Relevance," (Farleigh Dickinson University, New Jersey, April, 1970), pp. 488-490.

<sup>47</sup> McCloskey, p. 74.

Those people in the position of power will be: 1) owners of the large industrial, commercial or agricultural enterprises; 2) self-employed professionals such as lawyers, doctors, and publishers, and 3) politicians and labor leaders.

Sumption and Engstrom relate the idea of the community power structure to publicity:

In the relationship of the school to the power structure of a community, there is no better shield against the pressures which may be imposed than a full, free and uncompromising publicity.<sup>48</sup>

The publicity generated by the public relations program will be directed at those community groups which are identified.

Kindred, Bagin, and Gallagher define good community relations in terms of the community's financial support: "Good community relations means that the community is pleased with the educational services that the tax dollar has purchased."<sup>49</sup> They suggest that it is important to identify the key community people; that is, anyone whose opinion is highly respected. An effort should be made to get them into the schools, and involve them in the process of establishing goals and objectives for the school program.

### The Press

Proper utilization of the press by the local school system should be a goal of any public relations program. Gloria Dapper discusses the press in terms of honesty and

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<sup>48</sup>Sumption, p. 27.

<sup>49</sup>Kindred, Community Relations, p. 166.

integrity on the part of the local school program.<sup>50</sup> Since it is impossible to cover up stories, it is recommended that the school authorities cooperate with the press to present the entire story to the community.

One problem that the school faces in dealing with the press is that much of what the school does is invisible. In effect, schools are in the business of developing human resources which are not easily identified. Dapper suggests several ideas which can be helpful: 1) meetings should be scheduled with the editors of the papers who will be covering the school story; 2) releases should be kept short and to the point; and 3) find out what deadlines must be met in order to have stories appear on time in the local press. Dapper summarizes by stating, "School districts are governmental units handling public funds, with authority in many cases, to levy taxes."<sup>51</sup> The press has an obligation to the local taxpayer to report as accurately as possible, what takes place in the school program.

School boards are one of the key components of the public relations program that will be presented to the community through the local press. Carolyn Mullins, in an article in Education Digest entitled "How To Get Along With Your Local Newspaper," suggest that most school boards are responsible for a bad relationship which may exist with the

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<sup>50</sup> Dapper, p. 25.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

press. "The press has a definite relationship to the proper function of a school board and the school board has an obligation to foster and promote the relationship."<sup>52</sup> Mullins emphasizes the fact that the local press is the best pipeline the schools have to the general public.

### Radio and Television

Radio presents several advantages that other avenues of communication do not. First, the impact of radio is immediate. Radio will be able to deliver your message faster than the printed word. Second, it is easy to use the radio in terms of the amount of resources required. Usually, one person can deliver an effective message with very little help from other staff. Kindred lists those things which school programs use radio for as: 1) spot announcements, 2) newscasts, 3) sport programs, 4) music programs, 5) discussion programs, 6) dramatic programs and 7) documentaries.<sup>53</sup>

The superintendent, in a majority of cases, will be the individual who is likely to be heard on radio when issues are discussed, or information is being given to the community. Question and answer programs, where the public can call the station and talk to the superintendent on the air are common.

Television is one of the least used channels of com-

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<sup>52</sup>Carolyn Mullins, Education Digest, "How To Get Along With Your Local Newspaper," (Prakken Publications, Michigan, 1974), p. 44.

<sup>53</sup>Kindred, Community Relations, p. 242.

munication. In most cases, public relations in the school program does not have the money or the sophistication and experience to effectively use this medium. Some of the larger school programs will use television to a limited degree. Television, when used properly, is the most powerful tool of communication which the school program can employ.

### School Publications

School publications often take a variety of forms. McCloskey outlines four points which the superintendent should address himself to: 1) to give the board of education a review of the progress of the school system as a whole; 2) to inform the parents of the phases of school life which their children will experience; 3) to reach the general public in order to gain their support, understanding, and respect; and 4) to give the community a factual and historical record of the community.<sup>54</sup>

Other items which are often found as school publications are student handbooks, papers, P.T.A. bulletins, yearbooks, annual reports for patrons, special publications, homework objectives and policies, grading and evaluation procedures, adult education, guidance and counseling, major curriculum developments, recommendations of advisory committees, school survey reports, safety, and school lunch policies. School publications are found to some degree

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<sup>54</sup>McCloskey, p. 484.



in every school public relations program. Effective use of publications can be observed in programs where goals and objectives have been clearly stated.

#### Related Studies In The Field Of Public Relations

Walter Butler completed a 1963 study at the University of Mississippi entitled "An Evaluation of the School-Public Relations In Selected Secondary Schools In Mississippi."<sup>55</sup> Each participant in the study was asked to rate the school public relations program using the author's revision of the Wien's School-Public Relations Appraisal Form and a questionnaire developed by the author. Butler found the following: 1) larger districts had better public relations; 2) the overall quality of the programs was poor; 3) school administrators were largely responsible for the programs; 4) there was a lack of professional leadership; and 5) the need for a continuous program of public relations.

A study of public relations personnel was completed by Charles Morrison in 1971 at the University of Northern Illinois.<sup>56</sup> Morrison found that schools were looking for teachers who could do the public relations job part-time. This individual would be a service person and would work with community groups, contact the media, and work with the

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<sup>55</sup>Walter Butler, "An Evaluation of the School-Public Relations In Selected Secondary Schools In Mississippi," (diss., University of Mississippi, 1963), p. 112.

<sup>56</sup>Charles Morrison, "A Survey of the Need For Public Relations Personnel In the Public Schools of the State of Illinois," (Diss., Northern Illinois University, 1971).

staff.

The National School Public Relations Association recommends certain provisions be included in any good program. These provisions begin with a clear statement of the purposes of the public relations program. In addition, provision should be made for a public relations professional in the organization. Robert McHenry, in a paper presented to the Annual Convention of the National School Boards Association, recommends that a district with 20,000 students should have a communications expert with sufficient background and ability to understand the problems of the school district, its students, employees, and patrons.<sup>57</sup> The National School Public Relations Association uses a table which this study has included in the interview instrument (see Appendix B).

The public relations specialist has several important responsibilities. These include the following: 1) to keep all citizens of the district informed through channels of communication on all the policies, programs, and planning of the school system; 2) to invite the advice and counsel of the people of the school district at all times, especially at all monthly meetings of the school board except executive sessions; and 3) to solicit the sound thinking of student

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<sup>57</sup>Robert McHenry, "How To Attain Good Public Relations In Your District," (Paper presented to the Annual Convention of the National School Board Association, April, 1975), pp. 5-7.

councils and the people through advisory committees selected from the community and appointed by the school board to consider those problems which vitally affect the future of the school district and the local community.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Don Bagin, How To Start and Improve a Public Relations Program, (Evanston, Ill., National School Boards Association, 1975), p. 11.

## CHAPTER III

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Chapter III presents the data which was gathered during the field portion of the study for each of the eight participating districts. After a brief historical introduction to the Fox Valley area, each district is presented and discussed as related to five major areas: public relations policy in each district, the public relations professional, program planning and evaluation, internal and external communication, and the superintendent's assessment of the program as it exists in his/her particular district.

A table summarizing the data for each district is presented with each district. A general assessment of each of the five modules is discussed in each section; however, a more general analysis of the data is discussed in Chapter IV. The chapter is concluded with a brief presentation of budget information as it relates to each district of the study.

#### A General Overview of the Fox Valley

The Fox River Valley of Kane County, Illinois, is a beautiful river valley which cuts across several communities between forty and fifty miles directly west of downtown Chicago. The river valley communities include Aurora, Batavia, Geneva, St. Charles, and Elgin. Actually, all the

communities discussed in the study are considered Fox River Valley communities even though they may be several miles distant from the valley itself.

The area has a long and interesting history. Because of their proximity to the Fox River, the communities were settled rather early in the 19th century, and flourished because of the river traffic and trade which took place before the center of population in northern Illinois shifted to the City of Chicago on the shores of Lake Michigan. Indians were still found on reservations in the area as late as 1840.

Many of the old buildings, dating back well over one hundred years, are still standing today. The rich historical traditions of these communities are evident in the community pride exhibited by the residents along the Fox River. This pride and feeling of community can be seen throughout the valley including the public school systems located in each village. As with the communities themselves, the schools have a long historical background.

The face of the Fox Valley is scheduled for some swift changes during the next decade. A tremendous growth in population has been forecast for the river communities. Such growth will bring a new flavor to these old communities. Each community is aware of the expected growth and while most welcome the new residents, most valley inhabitants are very concerned that their communities retain the rich

charm and tradition that made them such a pleasant place to live in.

### District I

District I is a unit district comprised of eighteen schools (twelve elementary schools, three middle schools, one senior high school). The district has a total pupil enrollment of 10,100. The total instructional staff for the district is 560. In 1976-77, the average teaching salary was \$15,090.00. State and federal funds make up approximately 40% of the revenue used to support the district. The remaining amount is based largely on local tax effort. The school district has as its community, one of the largest population centers in the Fox Valley. The city is located on the Fox River and while the downtown section has declined over the last decade, the outskirts of the community have seen rapid growth which has been reflected in the steadily increasing enrollment of the school district.

### Public Relations Policy - District I

The district had several written public relations policies which had been approved by the board of education and included in the policy manual for the district. The policy entitled "Objectives Of the School/Community Relations Program" states:

...the main objective of contemporary school public relations policy is to stimulate citizens to learn about the schools so that they can participate more intelligent-

ly in the solution of educational problems.

The policy describes the communications process as "a two-way current of communication from school to community, and from community to school." A second policy is entitled "General School/Community Relations Policy." The policy states that "...it shall be the practice of the board to utilize the advice and assistance of all interested individuals and groups in the solution of its educational and financial problems." The policy places responsibility for implementing the program on the superintendent of schools, who is to act under the guidance and policies of the local board of education. "He (the superintendent) shall conduct an active and comprehensive informational program throughout the community to promote widespread understanding of the school program."

A review of the literature indicates that a public relations program should have a written policy, approved by the board of education. The existence of policy in the public relations area is described as important by most of the major authors in the field. District I has a concise policy statement and the policy is carried out in a meaningful manner by the superintendent as further analysis of the district will indicate. In describing the public relations program, the superintendent stated that "...public relations is the most important function of the school superintendent and chief administrative officer in any building." The super-

intendent indicated that the schools belong to the public, and the employees of the public must make a good case for what is taking place.

A review of the literature indicates that program goals and objectives with established strategies to achieve the stated goals and objectives should be part of the policy statement. The district did not have a specific program which would establish annual goals and objectives for the public relations program. The policy statements described did indicate the general direction which the public relations program should take; however, specific goals and objectives which would be considered part of the program were found as goals and objectives of other programs. The administrator responsible for a particular program, such as curriculum, formulates goals and objectives which involve public relations which are specific to his/her program. In this way, goals and objectives are continually defined. The danger of poor coordination and inadequate monitoring and communication exists with the type of process used in the district. The district overcomes this problem, to some extent, by providing for effective channels of communication among the chief officers of the district.

The superintendent did not place a great deal of importance upon the written policies for the public relations program; consequently, the policy statements were not communicated to the staff in their written form. The statements



are available to staff as part of the regular district policy manual which can be found in each school and in the district offices.

#### Public Relations Professional - District I

District I employs an individual full-time to direct the public relations program. The superintendent stated that as the chief officer, he directs the program. The individual who is responsible for the daily operation of the public relations program is the "Public Information Services Coordinator." The superintendent outlined three important points with reference to the person responsible for public relations: 1) the person needs insight; 2) the person must go where the news is happening; 3) the person must have the public's viewpoint; that is, the need of the community to know what is happening must always be considered.

The person employed in the district is full-time and reports directly to the superintendent. The superintendent described what he referred to as "the superintendent's cabinet." The superintendent's cabinet is made up of the Assistant Superintendent for Business, the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, and the Assistant Superintendent for Personnel. There is some question as to how much input the public relations person has in the decision making process. The individual functions as a staff person; that is, the individual performs a service. As a staff person, the in-

dividual reports to the superintendent in an advisory manner of communication. Most authors in the field of public relations suggest that the public relations person should be an active member of the decision-making process in the school district. No evidence was found to indicate that this was the case in District I.

#### Program Planning & Evaluation - District I

Most authors acknowledge the fact that public relations program planning and evaluation is the most neglected area of public relations. The superintendent of the district indicated that this was indeed the case for the district. Evaluation of the public relations program is done informally. The superintendent described two major tools used as a basis for evaluation: 1) referenda, and 2) the board of education. The district recently passed a referendum by a narrow margin. The superintendent stated that such things as referenda usually will reflect the amount of public support in the community. The board of education is constantly evaluating the public relations program.

The general weakness of the district in the area of planning can be traced to the fact that needs and strategies are not identified in an on-going process. The superintendent stated that planning is done while considering what is important to parents; however, a specific process of planning was not found to be present.

The review of the literature revealed several tools

which can be used to gather information for the purpose of proper program management and effective program evaluation. These tools can include observations, records, telephone surveys, questionnaires, checklists, rating scales and opinion polls. District I uses several of these tools. Surveys are sent to the community. The district uses yearly data-process to keep community information current. In addition, research is purchased by the district on a need basis. Specific research is done to answer particular questions which may arise. In planning for the referendum, the district did a lot of research related to specific queries that the district officials had.

The district does not have a formalized and on-going program of evaluation and planning. The district needs to identify specific program goals and the means available to measure and evaluate progress towards the stated program goals. The literature indicates that proper planning and evaluation cannot be done on a need basis only.

#### Internal & External Communication - District I

The superintendent of District I stated that the students and the staff are the two major targets of internal communications. Student councils are organized in each school within the district. The student council provides a channel of communication between school officials and school staff and the students. In addition, the superintendent meets with a student advisory group once each month. The advisory

group is composed of representatives from each of the student councils in the district.

A major vehicle of communication for the district staff is a newsletter which is distributed as the need arises. The superintendent pointed out that there was no set pattern for the newsletter. The newsletter tries to emphasize the students. The district newsletter is entitled "Merge." A sample of information from the newsletter revealed information on the following topics: curriculum, new staff, calendar of events, and a student honor roll. Staff advisory groups are formed as specific problems arise or as identified goals dictate. "Ad hoc" groups such as curriculum committees are used in the district.

District I has a strong program for internal communications. This is evidenced by the vehicles which provide for two-way communication among staff, students, school board, and administration. A variety of documents were obtained which exemplify a good public relations program in this particular area. Documents such as board briefs (available to staff), a student rights and responsibilities booklet, a student manual for the three middle schools, and a variety of fact sheets illustrate the internal communications taking place in the district.

The district has not established procedures for determining what kind of information should be supplied to the staff or the students. The literature indicates that such

a procedure should be identified. District I supplies information to staff and students which is not identified as important according to some established guidelines. The informal process used in the district appears to be effective despite the fact that the district is deficient in the area of established procedures.

A review of the literature revealed several groups which should be the target of an external communications program: parents, special community groups, and advisory groups. The superintendent of District I described the community as one of about 50,000 constituents. The most important group which continuous communication takes place is the parent-teacher organizations in the district. In addition, the district utilizes task forces or committees which are organized on a need basis. Examples of such committees were given as a transportation committee, an architect selection committee for the new high school-middle school complex built in 1977. The superintendent described these committees as advisory only.

External communication should involve the resources which are available to the district. Radio, television to a limited extent, and the local press are the three major vehicles available to the school district to facilitate a good communications program. The superintendent stated that he works closely with the editor of the local newspaper. Actually, several newspapers cover the school board

meetings and events in the district, but the superintendent described only one paper as providing excellent coverage of the school program. The district did not use local television; however, several radio stations were utilized by the school district to provide coverage for athletic events as well as provide an opportunity for district officials to answer community questions on open line programs.

Several bulletins and reports are regularly sent to the community or made available to interested individuals. Among such documents are: 1) an annual report which is sent to each home in the community; 2) a district fact sheet which lists a variety of statistical information; 3) a pamphlet available to anyone attending a school board meeting; and 4) a newsletter called the "School Zone" which is mailed to the community on a regular basis.

District I is able to operate an effective program of external communications. The district uses most of the methods which the literature discussed as effective vehicles of external communication. Television is not used; however, television is a vehicle of communication rarely used by a majority of school districts. The fact that the district does not identify goals and objectives for the program leaves several questions unanswered. As with other areas of the program, a lack of specific goals or objectives makes it impossible to measure how effective the program may be in the area of external communications.

Superintendent's Assessment - District I

The superintendent stated that he thought he had a good public relations program. He suggested that there are several important ideas which must be remembered: 1) the program should develop enthusiasm which is contagious; 2) the community is the most important concept to remember when establishing a public relations program. He stated that "good public relations is like an iceberg - 90% of the program is not visible to the community."

District I has a sound program of public relations which meets a majority of the criteria the literature suggests should be found in a program. Two areas of weakness can be described: 1) a lack of stated program goals and objectives for public relations which are periodically evaluated, and 2) the informal structure of communication which exists among the administrative staff of the district in the area of public relations. The absence of goals leads to an informal structure where tasks are completed on a need basis, often with no related plan in focus.

The absence of goals in the program was not mentioned by the superintendent as an area where the program could be strengthened; however, the lack of goals has a tendency to create a crisis-oriented program. The district had recently experienced a great deal of change (attendance boundaries, new construction, a referendum) and the community was educated concerning the district's needs in a very short time span of

approximately eighteen months.

The referendum passed successfully and the program "blitz" was adequate. Such a campaign may not have been necessary had the district employed a more substantial program of public relations on a continuing basis. Such programs tend to develop community trust and create less anxiety when difficult decisions of finance and program must be made.



TABLE IDistrict I Summary

	Pres.	Not Pres.	Not Det.
Written Policy Statement	X		
Cont. in District Policy Manual	X		
Program Purpose in Policy	X		
Delegation of Auth. in Policy	X		
P.R. Program Identified	X		
Full-Time Professional	X		
Reports to Superintendent	X		
Active Member of Adm. Team		X	
Formal Planning		X	
Strategies Based Upon Ident. Needs		X	
Formal Program of Evaluation		X	
Two-way Communication with Staff	X		
Two-way Communication with Pupils	X		
Two-way Communication with S.B.	X		
Evidence of Grp.Part. of Staff	X		
Evidence of Grp.Part. of Pupils	X		
Specific Groups Identified	X		
Radio	X		
Newspaper	X		
Dissemination of Info. to Comm.	X		

## District II

District II is a unit district located in the Fox River Valley approximately forty miles west of Chicago. The community is located on the river and is composed of business, industrial and professional people. The community has a stable population in terms of growth. The district has an enrollment just over 10,000 pupils. There are eleven elementary schools, two junior high schools and one senior high school in the district. The district employs nearly 500 certificated staff members. The teacher's salary schedule is based on an index ratio and offers salaries which are comparable to the highest paid salaries in the Fox Valley area. The community has a diversified residential, commercial and industrial tax base with an assessed valuation per pupil of approximately \$18,000.

### Public Relations Policy - District II

The district does have a written policy which describes the public relations program and is part of the board approved policy manual for the school district. The superintendent was not familiar with the policy and stated that it was general and did not detail the public relations program.

A copy of the policy was not obtained during the investigation process, so there is no determination regarding whether delegation of authority is provided for in the policy statement. In actual practice, one of the superintendent's assistants performs the functions of the public relations

person as part of the responsibilities; therefore, the actual delegation of authority was very obvious and direct to a line officer.

The district does not have specific program goals and objectives with established strategies to achieve goals and objectives. In effect, an actual program of public relations does not exist. Public relations is simply one of the several responsibilities that the designated assistant performs. The absence of goals and objectives is directly related to the evaluation and planning portion of the program, and makes the latter difficult. The absence of goals makes this portion of the program weak and diminishes the communication efforts of the program in District II.

#### Public Relations Professional - District II

District II does not employ a full-time professional to direct the public relations program. Instead, the assistant superintendent for personnel is delegated this responsibility as part of his other responsibilities. The superintendent estimated that the individual spends approximately twenty percent of his time in directing public relations related activities. This person does report directly to the superintendent and is directly involved in the decision-making process.

The National School Public Relations Association and the criteria derived from a review of the literature suggest that the public relations person be full-time. The superin-

tendent was aware of this and stated that there are two schools of thought on this subject: 1) employing a public relations person full-time and 2) incorporating the public relations responsibilities into a broader job description. He favored the latter because program security can be justified if budget cuts are made. The advantage can be found in the fact that the person in this instance has line authority and is involved in the decision-making process.

While such a structure does offer advantages, a part-time person cannot perform as effectively as a full-time person, and, therefore, cannot conduct as strong a public relations program. District II is doing a variety of effective things in the area of public relations, but the absence of a full-time professional in a district of over 10,000 pupils must be criticized as being inadequate.

#### Program Planning & Evaluation - District II

Evaluation of the public relations program is done informally. The superintendent included three people or groups as essential in this process: 1) the superintendent; 2) the assistant superintendent; and 3) the board of education. The process is an on-going one that is continually monitored by the superintendent.

The superintendent does employ a number of evaluation tools which are suggested in the literature. Information about the community is often collected through a survey instrument which is placed in the newsletter ("School Days")

which is mailed to the community. Such surveys often get surprising results. The superintendent stated that 70% of the homes responded to the most recent survey. In addition, the district uses such sources as the annual Phi Delta Kappa poll in Kaplan, the citizen's advisory council which exists in each building in the school district, a central council, and a local research firm which prepares research for the district upon request.

Public relations workshops are held periodically for the administrators and the secretaries of the school district. Such a workshop will utilize local media people as well as discuss topics such as the format for newsletters and newsworthy items.

A long range planning program is not used by the district. Goals for public relations are discussed at workshops such as the one described. The superintendent characterized all other planning as being informal.

District II has a good program of data collection but the district needs to formulate goals in the areas of planning and evaluation. District II does an effective job of utilizing the community resources and seeking feedback. The district could make more efficient use of its efforts if it had a formal planning process which described program goals and objectives. The district is aware of the deficiency but may not move to strengthen this weakness because the superintendent described the program as good but it "could

be better."

#### Internal & External Communication - District II

District II has an in-district newsletter which is distributed once a month when paychecks are issued. The newsletter is prepared by the assistant superintendent. The district also uses the talents of one of its high school teachers. In addition, the high school has its own newsletter and news releases. The district newsletter contains general items of interest to the staff such as information on insurance and policy. Teachers are alerted to valuable workshops through the newsletter.

The district has a good program of internal communications. Two-way communication is achieved through such vehicles as citizens committees, task forces, staff committees, student advisory groups, and the board of education. The superintendent is aware of the important role of internal communications and is visible and accessible to community, staff and pupils. The superintendent had been promoted to the position from the assistant superintendent's position. As assistant, he had been responsible for public relations and, consequently, was aware of the importance of two-way communication.

The district issues a newsletter three times each year. The newsletter is used as a communication tool and as an information gathering tool. Various news media are employed by District II. A local radio station broadcasts

school programs and covers athletic events. Four newspapers cover newsworthy events in the school district. The district issues regular newsreleases to the community through the local newspapers. The district maintains a "community-school" mailing list of unions, manufacturing firms, and other business interests in the community. Realtors are also involved in the external communications process.

The superintendent described the community as a mixture of blue collar and white collar families. He stated that this fact is carefully studied when communication with the community takes place. He suggested that procedures should be informal, and that stories should be short and of high interest.

The program of external communications in District II is a sound one. As with internal communications, the superintendent recognizes the importance of maintaining open channels of communication with the community. The district's informality in conducting the program creates weaknesses which are obvious in planning and evaluation.

#### Superintendent's Assessment - District II

The superintendent stated that the public relations program of the district was above average. On a scale of 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest), he would give the district a 7. He described the program as weak or needing improvement in two areas: 1) improving technique, and 2) evaluation and

feedback.

Based upon the data gathered, the superintendent's assessment is an accurate diagnosis. The program is adequate in that it meets most of the criteria described in the literature. The superintendent correctly identified the evaluation and feedback procedure as needing improvement. The data suggests that the feedback processes are sufficient for a good program; however, a lack of formal planning makes the evaluation procedure tentative and often uncertain.

It should be noted that the superintendent is comparing his program to the programs in the surrounding school districts. Based upon such a comparison, the district does a commendable job in the area of public relations. If a comparison is made with suggested guidelines for a good program, the district comes under greater scrutiny and does not fare as well as the study indicates in the analysis presented.

A key point to consider when assessing the quality of the program is the leadership capabilities of the superintendent. In the case of District II, the district had several superintendents recently and the current superintendent seemed to be meeting the need for strong leadership. In such a situation, the superintendent is relying upon his administrative capabilities and organizational talent to lead.

Based upon the superintendent's own assessment of the program, it can be inferred that the superintendent knows the limitations and resources of the district which are at his disposal.



TABLE IIDistrict II Summary

	Pres.	Not Pres.	Not Det.
Written Policy Statement	X		
Cont. in Dist. Policy Manual	X		
Program Purpose in Policy			X
Delg. of Auth. in Policy			X
P.R. Program Identified		X	
Full-Time Professional		X	
Reports to Superintendent	X		
Active Memb. of Adm. Team	X		
Formal Planning		X	
Strategies Based Upon Iden. Needs		X	
Formal Program of Evaluation		X	
Two-way Comm. with Staff	X		
Two-way Comm. with Pupils	X		
Two-way Comm. with S.B.	X		
Evidence of Grp. Part. with Stf.	X		
Evidence of Grp. Part. with Pupils			X
Specific Groups Identified	X		
Radio	X		
Newspaper	X		
Disseminating Info. to Comm.	X		

### District III

District III is located in a rural area about fifty-five miles west of Chicago. The district is large in geographical area compared to most of the other school districts of the Fox Valley and covers approximately 140 square miles. The district is one of two districts in the valley which actually encompasses several communities. The diversity of communities presents some difficulties which will be discussed. The district has a total staff of one hundred twenty teachers with an area vocational center staffed with an additional twenty teachers. Enrollment in the district is 2,400. The district has three K-5 buildings, one middle school, and one high school. Because of the distances involved, a large portion of the enrollment is bused (approximately 1,800 students) using twenty-five buses each day. District III is a member of two cooperatives, a special education cooperative and a vocational education cooperative. The district has an assessed valuation of about 60 million dollars.

### Public Relations Policy - District III

District III does not have written policy which describes a public relations program. The superintendent indicated that public participation is the most important element of the program in District III. Two policies were found which can be related to public relations: 1) a public participation policy; and 2) a policy dealing with citizen

advisory councils. The public participation policy states,

Residents of the district, who are qualified because of training, experience or personal characteristics, shall be encouraged to take an active part in school affairs. Such persons may be invited to act as advisors, individually and in groups, and to carry out certain assignments delegated by the Board of Education.

One of the assignments described in the policy is public relations.

A second policy entitled "Organization and Dissolution of Advisory Committees" describes the process to be used in forming such committees, and the philosophy of the district in using citizen advisory committees. The superintendent attributed extreme importance to these committees and stated that much of the work of the district is accomplished through these committees.

District III lacks any formal written policy statement for public relations. The absence of policy affects the delegation of authority and creates difficulty in determining the purpose of public relations for the district. In turn, the quality of the entire program is subsequently affected.

#### Public Relations Professional - District III

The superintendent acts as the public relations professional in District III. The superintendent estimated that approximately 5% of his time is devoted to public relations related activity. District III is large enough to employ a person to handle public relations. The only advantage which District III may enjoy is the fact that the superintendent

is in a position to make good decisions which relate to public relations. The absence of a public relations specialist also eliminates the problems of making the individual an active member of the decision-making team.

The superintendent suggested that the stability of the district does not indicate the need for more emphasis in the public relations area. Stability as it exists in some districts can develop a false sense of security. Such a false sense of security can and often does end with disastrous results for the school program. There is no substitute for public relations and although District III maintains close community contact and involvement of the residents, the danger exists that communication in the district will deteriorate or become one-way.

#### Program Planning & Evaluation - District III

Goals and objectives for public relations are not stated in written form; instead, the district uses an informal process. Feedback for evaluation is obtained in much the same manner. The superintendent referred to several sources which assist him in planning and evaluating what the district does in public relations. Kaplan conducts an annual survey which the district uses for the program. In addition, the following sources are used: 1) parent-teacher organizations; 2) school board members; 3) citizen's advisory council and 4) special parent action groups which exist in two of the communities in the district.

The district does reflect a great deal of community involvement in local affairs. One example is a council of governments which exists in the community. The council is composed of members which represent the villages, the county, and the schools. The council sits as a board with stated functions such as planning and new tasks. Meetings are held four to five times a year or as often as is necessary. Another example of community involvement in planning is a parent advisory committee that works with the area vocational center.

Planning and evaluation is taking place in District III; however, the district has not been able to channel all of the community involvement in the district into good public relations planning. As a result, this area of the program lacks structure and must be considered weak.

#### Internal & External Communication - District III

The superintendent meets with the elementary principals every other week, and meets with all the administrators once each month. The district has an active program of inservice training for the staff each year. The administrative group determines what the goals and objectives for teacher inservice will be each year. There is no inservice which is regularly held for public relations. The public relations aspects of particular programs are often discussed at general administrative meetings held before the school year begins or at the end of the year. The superintendent does not meet with his administrative staff during the

summer months.

The district does not have a regular newsletter for the staff. The superintendent stated that such a newsletter can often work against the purpose of developing good communication. The superintendent travels to each of the schools to speak to staff and pupils regularly. Each school has a student organization; however, the superintendent does not meet with this group on a regular basis.

The district prints a variety of materials which are distributed to the community. Legal notices, elections, and student handbooks are printed by the district. The district does not have a regular community newsletter; although occasionally something is sent to the parents. An elementary handbook goes out to all the parents each year. Board meetings, parent-teacher conferences, parent-teacher organizations, and special events held at the schools are examples of external communication in the district. Of course, a great deal of two-way communication takes place through the advisory councils which have been described.

The district releases information on a regular basis to three newspapers. At least one newspaper is represented at each regular school board meeting. No evidence of the use of radio or television was found for the district. Much of the communication evident in the district is fragmented and one-way communication. No evidence of a central communications program was found in District III. Communication,

both internal and external, is mostly informal, and, while there is much communication taking place, a general lack of a communications process detracts from the many positive things taking place in the district. The district does have a problem which is unique in comparing it with other districts in the Fox Valley; that is, the district encompasses at least three separate communities of moderate size. The data does suggest that a specific public program to centralize communication is needed. The lack of such a factor weakens the entire communications process.

#### Superintendent's Assessment - District III

The general feeling expressed by the superintendent was that the working relationship with the community is excellent. The community supports the schools and there is a mutually positive relationship between the community and the school. The district was organized in 1948, and the superintendent stated that the community had made a great deal of progress. The superintendent characterized the value structure of the community as "good" and pointed to the positive attitudes that surround the district's high school programs.

Clearly, the superintendent is confident that he has the support of the community in terms of public relations. The superintendent's assessment of his program was generally vague and not measurable as the actual program in the district seems to be. A lack of goals and objectives,

with no formal planning or evaluation leaves the program in a precarious position. Should special needs develop, they may not be reorganized and addressed properly; consequently, the district is vulnerable to changes, should they occur.

The apparent positive feelings which the superintendent has towards the community in terms of support are not based upon research or specific information obtained through an instrument such as a survey. To reach the conclusion that community support exists without adequate research can be a dangerous and misleading assumption. As with District II, the district does not have goals or objectives with adequate formal planning. The difference, however, can be found in the perceptual differences of the two superintendents in question. The superintendent of District II is able to accurately assess his program, while the superintendent of District III has developed a false sense of security. The need for accurate community assessment exists in District III, but may not be realized until the district approaches a time of decision-making such as might occur prior to a referendum.

As Table III indicates, the district does have many of the components desired in a public relations program. Actually, the district could have an excellent program with more attention to areas such as planning and evaluation. The superintendent in the district is aware of the importance



of public relations. As has been indicated, however, he may be spending too much time with a vocal minority thus neglecting or "taking for granted" that strong support exists among the silent majority in the district.

TABLE IIIDistrict III Summary

		Pres.	Not Pres.	Not Det.
Written Policy Statement			X	
Cont. in Dist. Policy Manual			X	
Program Purpose in Policy			X	
Delg. of Auth. in Policy			X	
P.R. Program Identified			X	
Full-Time Professional			X	
Reports to Superintendent	X			
Active Mem. of Adm. Team	X			
Formal Planning			X	
Strategies Based on Iden. Needs	X			
Formal Program of Evaluation			X	
Two-way Comm. with Staff	X			
Two-way Comm. with Pupils	X			
Two-way Comm. with S.B.	X			
Evid. of Grp. Part. of Staff	X			
Evid. of Grp. Part. of Pupils				X
Specific Groups Identified	X			
Radio			X	
Newspapers	X			
Dissemination of Info. to Comm.	X			

### District IV

District IV is located in a community on the Fox River about forty miles west of downtown Chicago. The school district was consolidated into a community unit district in a referendum in 1952. The main support of the local schools is derived from local real estate taxes. Approximately 66% of these taxes are used to support the school district. Currently, the district has a pupil enrollment of 2,560, with a professional staff of about 100 teachers. The professional staff includes speech correctionists, remedial reading specialists, guidance specialists, art teachers, vocal and instrumental music teachers, school nurses, and physical education teachers. The district includes one 9-12 high school, a 6-8 middle school, three K-5 schools, and one K-4 school.

### Public Relations Policy - District IV

District IV does not have a written policy statement which outlines program purpose and the delegation of authority for the public relations program. The district does have a section in the policy manual which deals with community. Policies in the section deal with such topics as public participation in meetings and publicity.

The absence of specific policy suggests evidence that the district does not have an identified program of public relations. The superintendent operates in an in-

formal manner, discussing matters or distributing information to groups which are identified as important depending upon the particular topic at hand.

#### Public Relations Professional - District IV

The district does not employ a professional, either part-time or full-time, whose major responsibility can be identified as public relations. Instead, the superintendent outlined what he termed a "decentralized plan" where each principal in the district shares responsibility for public relations. The superintendent sees himself as the administrator of the program. The principals send the superintendent a copy of everything that leaves their building to parents and community. In addition, the board of education has a standing committee for community relations.

The fact that the principals are designated as those people responsible for public relations further indicates the lack of a public relations program in the district. The district lacks a coordinator for public relations activities. The limited amount of time that the superintendent or the building principals can devote to school-community relations is not sufficient. The superintendent acknowledged that the district had inadequate resources in this area; however, considering the funds available he felt that a real public relations program was not feasible.

#### Program Planning & Evaluation - District IV

District IV does not conduct a formal program of planning and evaluation for public relations. The superintendent receives a variety of informal feedback which is used for evaluation. The feedback comes from such sources as: the school board, regular administrative meetings, parent-teacher organizations which exist in the individual schools, an instructional council, and a communications committee. The literature in this area emphasizes the need for a formal program of evaluation and planning. District IV does not have such a program and this weakness has affected the district in a dramatic fashion. The district has attempted to pass an educational referendum three times during the last year and each time the residents have defeated the referendum.

The situation in District IV suggests that public relations in the district may have been conducted more effectively. The absence of the determined criteria of formal planning and evaluation, strategies based upon identified needs and formal planning have contributed a great deal to the present situation which exists in the district.

#### Internal & External Communication - District IV

The district has an administrative council which meets weekly. The council consists of the principals and the superintendent. The business manager is the only other

central office administrator, and he attends these meetings when it becomes necessary. In addition, the district publishes what the superintendent referred to as an "administrative bulletin." The bulletin gives special recognition to individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the district or their profession in general. A classified bulletin is sent to all non-certificated staff more sporadically.

A variety of evidence indicates that the district does an adequate job in the area of internal communications. Student councils, yearbooks (high school and junior high school), parent bulletins, and handbooks are utilized by the district. As described, the district organizes much of its internal communications around committees. Much of what is accomplished in the district in communications must be done by the individual schools. The superintendent does not have sufficient administrative staff in the central office to maintain a strong program of communications. While the district is doing a great deal in this area of public relations, the absence of good coordination from the central office significantly weakens the district's efforts. Assistance in the central office is needed.

A meter list from the local electrical company provides the superintendent with a mailing list which is used for the district newsletter. The newsletter is mailed to the community regularly. The district also has a parent-

teacher council which has representatives from each local parent-teacher organization. The council contains principals, the superintendent, all presidents, and all past presidents of the parent-teacher organizations in the school district. The superintendent stated that the council is an excellent liaison group with the community. The superintendent is a member of the Chamber of Commerce and the local Lions organization. The high school principal is a member of Kiwanis, and the school board president belongs to the Rotary organization in the community.

Three newspapers are utilized by District IV. A local radio station covers sporting events at the high school. The superintendent remarked that he can get time on the station if he requests it.

#### Superintendent's Assessment - District IV

The superintendent suggested that two things need to be done in his district: 1) more cost information must be regularly given to the public; 2) the district must identify the vocal critics and involve them in the district's educational program. Actually, the areas identified by the superintendent are symptomatic of a weak public relations program. The district needs to direct more of its resources into the public relations program.

There appears to be a critical point in the evolution of a district which is changing rapidly, where information and community involvement must have taken place.

Once this crisis point is reached, vocal critics have a tendency to remain critical despite an increased information flow or an invitation to become involved in the district's planning and evaluation program. The superintendent termed the events which have taken place in District IV as "disquieting."

The major areas of weakness in the public relations program in the district are three: 1) a lack of policy for a public relations program and the subsequent absence of a public relations program; 2) an absence of formal planning and evaluation; 3) an absence of central coordination for public relations related activities in the district. The district is unique in the study to the extent that the superintendent can use hindsight to determine the specific causes for repeated failure to pass an educational referendum in the school district.

District IV was not the only district in the study to be found lacking a public relations policy, but in the case of District IV, a lack of a definable program can be traced to the absence of program policy. The district needs to spend more time directing its attention to philosophy and possible program direction. The absence of formal planning and evaluation is, in part, a direct result of a weak program. In addition, the lack of any central program coordination severely limits any future growth for a good public relations program. Inadequate staffing in the cen-



tral office limits not only the public relations program in the district, but also the general administration of the entire district program. The superintendent is aware of the need for more help in the central office, however, there is no indication that additional staffing is being planned.

TABLE IVDistrict IV Summary

		Pres.	Not Pres.	Not Det.
Written Policy Statement		X		
Cont. in Dist. Policy Manual		X		
Program Purpose in Policy		X		
Dele. of Auth. in Policy		X		
P.R. Program Identified		X		
Full-Time Professional		X		
Reports to Superintendent		X		
Active Mem. of Adm. Team		X		
Formal Planning		X		
Strategies Based on Iden. Needs				X
Formal Program of Eval.		X		
Two-way Comm. with Staff	X			
Two-way Comm. with Pupils	X			
Two-way Comm. with S.B.	X			
Evid. of Grp. Part. of Staff	X			
Evid. of Grp. Part. of Pupils	X			
Specific Groups Identified		X		
Radio	X			
Newspapers	X			
Dissemination of Info. to Comm.	X			

### District V

School District V is the third largest district in Illinois with over 25,600 students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. The district encompasses an eighty-five square mile area which includes seven different communities. The school district is at the northern edge of the Kane County communities of the Fox Valley. The growing student population is served by thirty-one elementary schools (K-6), seven junior high schools (7-9), and three senior high schools (10-12).

The district also maintains other units which complement the classroom programs which are found in the district. These programs include a television studio, radio station, planetarium, and observatory, special education classrooms and a facility for trainable mentally handicapped, athletic stadium, developmental pre-school unit, bilingual center, and others.

About 56% of the districts operating funds come from state and federal sources, 39% from local taxes, and 5% from other sources. The budget for the district annually exceeds over \$40,000,000.00

### Public Relations Policy - District V

District V has fifty-six different policies which come under the heading "General Public Relations." The policies which pertain to each section of analysis will be described in terms of their significance to each area of

the public relations program. The purpose of the program is described in a policy which outlines the goals and objectives of the program. The goals are divided into two sections: 1) goals that are to be implemented by the district's personnel, and 2) goals which are to be implemented by the community and the district personnel in a joint effort.

Section one contains the following goals: 1) to establish procedures that will increase articulation and understanding among district personnel; 2) to facilitate a program by which district personnel will become aware and efficiently utilize various means of communication within the community; 3) to communicate a climate which is open for positive change; 4) to encourage district staff to become involved in community activities, and 5) to disseminate information throughout the school community.

Section two contains goals implemented by community and district in a joint effort. The goals are described as: 1) to facilitate a program by which the community will become aware of and efficiently utilize various means of communication with the district; 2) to establish methods which provide school/community involvement in educational concerns; 3) to actively seek community participation in their local schools and attendance areas; 4) to encourage cooperative participation between community members and district staff to work with the district in special projects; 5) to solicit

information valuable to the district from the community and other informed sources, and 6) to prepare an on-going plan for evaluating all phases of school/community relations.

A second policy in the area of program states:

The Board of Education believes that educational public information is a planned and systematic two-way communications process between the district and its internal and external publics. The process is designed to develop a quality educational program to strengthen morale, to promote good will and cooperation, and to gain support in attaining the goals of the district.

District V does clearly meet the criteria described in the literature which is related to public relations policy. Of perhaps even greater significance, the district provides a solid foundation for the program by describing clearly stated goals for the program.

#### Public Relations Professional - District V

The public relations program is staffed by one full-time professional staff member. The public relations professional is responsible for all the school-community relations programs in the school district. The individual reports directly to the superintendent as often as is necessary, and attends any meetings which are related to the public relations program. Specific responsibilities of the public relations person include: 1) news releases which are issued to the local press; 2) information for the instructional program; 3) staff bulletins and other internal organs; 4) scheduling arrangements with the media; 5) workshops for groups

such as local parent-teacher associations and building principals, and 6) tasks related to special events such as referenda and district council and committee involvement.

The district employs two other individuals who assist the professional in the public relations program. A retired teacher is employed half-time to do much of the writing for the program. A student assists in the clerical work which allows the person an opportunity to study the program.

Despite the size of the district and the complexity of the programs, the public relations staff plays an important role in the district which is easily identified. The superintendent did not hesitate to answer specific questions. The fact that the district has such a clearly defined program with stated goals suggests a program which is highly coordinated where the communication flow proceeds without any great difficulty.

#### Program Planning & Evaluation - District V

The superintendent in conjunction with the staff professional for the program do most of their planning and evaluation informally. The superintendent described the process as "fairly loose" and later identified planning and evaluation as one portion of the program which needs improvement. The superintendent evaluates the staff professional informally. The public relations specialist does

describe goals and objectives which are used to measure performance, but investigation did not reveal the presence of specific program goals and objectives which are stated each year and subsequently used as a benchmark to evaluate the general quality and progress of the public relations program.

The superintendent receives an enormous amount of feedback related to public relations. Several sources of feedback are: the school board, citizens committees, staff committees, the administrative council, student councils, and a variety of community organizations which will be described in the communications section of the district analysis. The district needs to identify annual goals and objectives so that the feedback can be effectively measured within some type of framework. Such a task could be completed by the public relations professional in consultation with the superintendent.

#### Internal & External Communication - District V

District policy is provided for board-community relations, staff-community relations, and student-community relations. School board-community relations policy describes the philosophy of the district regarding this particular relationship. Policy states:

The Board of Education shall endeavor to maintain productive and friendly relations with the public, while also expecting an educationally informed public to provide for constructive relations with the Board of Education through continuous interaction with the program of

the district.

Staff-community relations encourages the staff to maintain person-to-person contact with parents, friends, neighbors, and families. The primary purpose of the staff in this sector is to keep the community informed and interested in the educational programs of the school district.

The district believes that the students should be a contributing factor to community understanding of the educational programs in the district. In addition, students are expected to be responsible and contributing factors to the enrichment of the programs at their respective schools.

Specifically, several elements were identified as contributing factors to the internal communications of District V: 1) a bulletin which is prepared for all new teachers; 2) surveys which are taken of the staff every two weeks; 3) a staff bulletin which is issued regularly; 4) inservice programs for the administration, and 5) student publications such as newspapers, yearbooks, and activity announcements.

District V has a complete program of internal communications which meets a majority of the criteria discussed in the literature related to this area of public relations. The key point is coordination in the district. The superintendent does a thorough job of coordinating the administration of the district. Because of the district's size, the superintendent is more of a facilitator and a decision-maker than an implementor.



District V is doing a variety of things to promote sound external communications. Several activities are outlined in the public relations policy section of the district's policy manual. One such policy is termed the "Public's Right To Know." The policy states: "In a democratic society, the people possess a right to information about the public school system they have created to carry out their needs, aspirations, and interests regarding their children."

The board of education believes in providing the public with clear and concise information about the school system on a continuous basis. Publications and other informational pieces are published periodically by the district to keep the community informed about policies, long and short range goals and objectives, planning and management of district operations, and educational programs and activities. Publications include a district newsletter, program handbooks and brochures, and a variety of publications which are available to the public at individual schools or at the administration center of the district. One such publication is a comprehensive booklet prepared by the public relations department. The booklet contains information in the following areas: curriculum, special programs, registration information, district goals, extra-curricular activities, staff and program, buildings, the local board of education and central administration, parent and citizens organizations, budgeting, student records, desegregation, and anti-

sex discrimination.

The district provides structured programs for building usage by the community and handling complaints or concerns. Parent and citizen involvement is present in the form of organizations and committees.

District V is serviced by four newspapers. A commercial radio station covers athletic events and provides one-half hour each week for the district to inform the community of the district's programs. The superintendent can be heard on the station twice each month. Commercial television is not used by the district; however, the district does have instructional television.

#### Superintendent's Assessment - District V

The superintendent stated that he had a very good public relations program. The program is excellent in terms of communication; but there is too much one-way communication. Better methods for community assessment are needed in the public relations program.

Data analyzed for District V would show agreement with the superintendent's assessment and suggest at least one other area where improvement is needed. The district does an excellent job of utilizing its vast resources and in communicating with pupils, staff, and community. Goals and objectives are outlined in policy, but the goals and objectives found here are general in nature and do not give the public relations program any meaningful specific

direction. Program goals need to be written and periodically evaluated by the superintendent and the public relations specialist.

The program lacks any meaningful long-range planning and formal evaluation. To a great extent, the absence of long-range planning and evaluation are related to specific goals and objectives. The superintendent hinted at this problem when he referred to a lack of systematic community assessment.

Other aspects of the program are strong and meet the criteria which has been derived from the literature. The district has a particularly strong program of internal and external communications, with firm coordination throughout. Table V indicates the strengths of the program in the district. Since the district is the largest district involved in the study, there may be a relationship between program quality and district size, although such a relationship is not considered in the study. District V does have greater and more varied resources to utilize in its public relations program.

TABLE VDistrict V Summary

	Pres.	Not Pres.	Not Det.
Written Policy Statement	X		
Cont. in Dist. Policy Manual	X		
Program Purpose in Policy	X		
Delg. of Auth. in Policy	X		
P.R. Program Identified	X		
Full-Time Professional	X		
Reports to Superintendent	X		
Act. Member of Adm. Team	X		
Formal Planning		X	
Strategies Based on Iden.Needs		X	
Formal Program of Evaluation		X	
Two-way Comm. with Staff	X		
Two-way Comm. with Pupils	X		
Two-way Comm. with S.B.	X		
Evid. of Grp. Part. with Staff	X		
Evid. of Grp. Part. with Pupils	X		
Specific Groups Identified	X		
Radio	X		
Newspapers	X		
Diss. of Info. to Community	X		

### District VI

District VI is located in a rural setting about fifty-five miles west of Chicago. Although the Fox River does not flow through the district, the district is located in Kane County and is considered a community of the Fox Valley. Currently, the district's enrollment is about 1,100 students, kindergarten through the twelfth grade. The district has one high school, one junior high school, and three elementary buildings. The district covers a large geographical area for its rather low enrollment - eighty-four square miles. During the past thirty years, the enrollment has increased from approximately 460 to 1,100 students, with the average rate of growth per year at approximately 5%. The modest climb in enrollment is expected to escalate rapidly during the next decade of growth. The 1976 assessed valuation for the district was \$34,293,009.

### Public Relations Policy - District VI

The district does not have any written policy to describe a public relations program. The superintendent suggested that plans have been made to define the public relations program. The program is based upon both practice and precedent. Information obtained in this area was not definitive. Apparently, past practice is a major consideration in determining what is done for public relations ac-

tivities. The principals are responsible for everything that is sent out of their buildings and the superintendent stated that this included any public relations oriented material.

The need for a public relations policy in the district is suggested by the composition of the district geographically. The district encompasses some five distinct communities. Indeed, it is inviting dangerous problems to operate a program without formal direction from the board of education to the administration. The absence of policy affects other areas of the program as well; thus weakening them and creating poor coordination of activities.

#### Public Relations Professional - District VI

A full-time professional is not employed for public relations in the district. Because of the small enrollment in the district the superintendent shares all public relations responsibilities with the building principals. The superintendent estimated that between 10% and 25% of their time is spent with duties related to the program. The principals are viewed by the superintendent as the administrative team.

Other than secretarial assistance, there is no professional staff available to the superintendent. All central office administrative duties are performed by the superintendent including business related matters. Conse-

quently, many functions are delegated to the principals. As described, public relations is among the delgated responsibilities. Insufficient data does not permit a recommendation for increased staff to be made; however, the delgation of such responsibilities to building principals is not a situation which can strengthen the program. One advantage of such a condition could be good coordination of activities because each principal is involved in the decision-making process and reports directly to the superintendent. The superintendent appeared too burdened to allow such a desirable condition to exist over any long period of time.

#### Program Planning & Evaluation - District VI

Program planning and evaluation are both done on an informal basis. The superintendent identified the following groups as actively involved in the planning process: the school board, the building administrators, the instructional staff and vocal citizens. Each building has a parent-teacher organization which is part of an umbrella organization called the "Citizens Advisory Council." The council was formed under the A-160 guidelines several years ago. Planning also takes place at regularly scheduled meetings of the superintendent, head teachers, and principals. The superintendent did not discuss evaluation. He stated that evaluation is informally done throughout the year. Vocal

citizens are, because of their high visibility, often involved in the planning and evaluation procedure.

As in other districts, District VI does not clearly state program goals and objectives. Consequently, strategies for the public relations program based upon identified needs are not clearly defined. The district does not meet suggested criteria in this area of examination, and will not until a more definitive program is outlined. The superintendent did not express any concern over the deficiencies in this area of the program. In fact, by relying on the board of education and vocal citizens, the superintendent considered evaluation and planning sufficient if not efficient. The danger here is that the program deficiencies must be recognized as such before they can be remediated or improved to a desired standard of efficiency.

#### External & Internal Communication - District VI

The internal communications program in the district includes meetings of the board of education twice each month, meetings for the district's principals, general announcements to the staff, and a newsletter which is issued to the staff on a regular basis. In addition, the high school and the junior high school publish annual yearbooks and periodic newsbulletins for both the pupils and the staff.

The superintendent publishes a general district handbook for parents and pupils. Information in the handbook



which pertains to pupils includes the following: information about the cafeterias, bus transportation provided by the school district, general rules and regulations of behavior, lockers, curricular requirements at the high school, the grading system, honor rolls, student awards, athletics, and co-curricular activities. The comprehensive handbook is an integral part of the communication process for the district because the district includes several population centers which provide a certain amount of diversity. The handbook helps to coordinate the communication process at each attendance center in the district.

The data gathered did not reveal good two-way communication with pupils and staff. The absence of a public relations specialist or someone to help the superintendent in the central office results in a one-way communication process through bulletins, memos, and announcements. The superintendent does not have sufficient time to maintain an effective dialogue among staff, pupils, and administration.

A network of external communications includes local churches and church groups, parent-teacher organizations at each school and a citizen's advisory council. A newsletter is mailed to every home in the district once each month. In addition, a brochure is available to citizens at all public school board meetings.

The parent and pupil handbook for the district dis-

cusses the parental relationship to the local school system.

A close working relationship between the home and the school is vital to the success of any educational program. Parents are welcome at the schools at any time and the faculty earnestly hopes that parents will not confine their visits to the schools to regular days of visitations.

Information included in the handbook for parents consists of the following: rules and regulations for the use of school facilities; provisions for bad weather; student insurance; student physical exams; textbook rentals and attendance regulations.

One local newspaper covers the district's publicity. The district does not use radio or television facilities in the public relations program. The superintendent indicated that an adversary relationship with the local newspaper had developed regarding written notification of public school board meetings. He was not concerned with this problem and did not consider the newspaper an integral part of the district's communications process. The review of the literature suggests that it is the responsibility of the school district to develop good press relations. If this is not done, the district places itself in a vulnerable position, and is losing a valuable resource.

District VI does not have good two-way communication with the community. As discussed under "Internal Communications," the absence of central office staff is the primary

contributing factor to the weakness. The district does identify specific groups but better channels of two-way communication need to be developed.

#### Superintendent's Assessment - District VI

The superintendent remarked that the small enrollment of the district does not suggest the need for a complete public relations program. The financial aspects of such a program would prove too great a burden upon the district's restricted budget. He did feel confident that the district's needs were being accurately assessed and evaluated through the informal methods described.

Investigation of the district's program reveals several areas which need to be strengthened. A public relations policy needs to be created and placed in the policy manual. The policy should provide for specific program planning and evaluation through goals and objectives. The district needs to identify someone to direct the public relations program. A part-time employee, or someone with additional responsibilities would be sufficient because of the size of the school district. The program should be oriented towards more two-way communication with the staff, the pupils, and the community.

In addition, the program suffers from inadequate professional staffing in the central office as is the case with District IV. The superintendent might have a stronger

program if he delegated the coordination of the public relations program to a principal in one of the district's smaller buildings. As with several other programs in the study, the program lacks: 1) a lack of central coordination, and 2) planning and evaluation. The superintendent did not identify coordination or planning and evaluation in his assessment, although he did discuss the need for more staffing in the central office.

TABLE VIDistrict VI Summary

		Pres.	Not Pres.	Not Det.
Written Policy Statement		X		
Cont. in Dist. Policy Manual		X		
Program Purpose in Policy		X		
Dele. of Auth. in Policy		X		
P.R. Program Identified		X		
Full-Time Professional		X		
Reports to Superintendent		X		
Active Mem. of Adm. Team		X		
Formal Planning		X		
Strategies Based on Iden. Needs		X		
Formal Program of Evaluation		X		
Two-way Comm. with Staff				X
Two-way Comm. with Pupils				X
Two-way Comm. with S.B.	X			
Evid. of Grp. Part. with Staff	X			
Evid. of Grp. Part. with Pupils				X
Specific Groups Identified	X			
Radio		X		
Newspaper	X			
Dissemination of Info. to Comm.	X			

### District VII

District VII is located on the Fox River some forty miles west of Chicago. The city is surrounded by agricultural land, while the residential section of the city lies on both sides of the Fox River. The community's population is about 10,500. Approximately 75% of the community's homes are owner occupied. Currently, the district's kindergarten through twelfth grade enrollment is about 3,100 pupils. The district has one senior high school, one junior high school, and four elementary buildings. The total instructional staff in the district is about 150.

### Public Relations Policy - District VII

District VII has a policy in the official policy manual of the district which outlines the philosophy of school-community relations, and the responsibilities of the school board of education in this area. The philosophy states that: "a. The public schools belong in every sense to the people who created them by consent and support them by taxation. b. The schools are only as strong as the intelligent and informed support of the people of the community; but never any stronger. c. The support of the people must be based upon their knowledge of, their understanding about, and their participation in the aims and efforts of the public schools."

School board responsibilities for school-community relations include keeping the community informed, involving

the community in school district affairs when appropriate, selection and maintenance of a citizen's advisory committee, and to cooperate with other community agencies.

Delegation of authority is not clearly stated in the policy, nor is a specific public relations program identified. The policy does an adequate job of describing the purpose of the public relations program.

#### Public Relations Professional - District VII

The superintendent frankly admitted that the district does not have an organized program identified as public relations or school-community relations. Several individuals perform the tasks of public relations including the superintendent of schools, the director of instruction, and the building principals. In terms of staff, the superintendent expressed the need for someone at least half-time to carry out public relations program responsibilities. The criteria for staffing a program in a district with 3,100 pupils suggests that at least one half-time individual is required, and preferably a full-time professional.

The absence of a public relations professional jeopardizes any efforts which are made to communicate to pupils, staff and community. If the program in District VII were to be improved, hiring such an individual must receive top priority. The public relations specialist is the single most important facet of the program. The superintendent recognized the need, but did not suggest that

additional staffing was planned.

#### Program Planning & Evaluation - District VII

District VII has no formal program for planning and evaluation; consequently, investigation did not reveal goals and objectives which are periodically monitored in the program. Informal planning and evaluation takes place with the local board of education and the administrative team.

Feedback and research are derived from several sources. Parent-teache- organizations are active in each building, and there is an additional parent-teacher group, the district council which meets periodically to discuss organizational program problems, district news, and information received from the superintendent and building principals. A citizen's task force organization is also available to supply the administration with feedback. Occasionally, the district contracts research services such as the Illinois School-Community Services to help with a referendum.

The criteria drawn from the literature in this area lists formal planning and evaluation and strategies based upon identified needs as requirements of a good public relations program. District VII does not meet the criteria because the district fails to define program goals and objectives. The superintendent stated that he felt that the community was supportive of the school district programs,



although his method of arriving at such a conclusion was informal and immeasurable.

#### Internal & External Communications - District VII

Internal communication in District VII includes administrative meetings such as monthly meetings with the building principals and weekly meetings with the central office staff. The superintendent also meets monthly with the teacher association president to discuss matters of mutual concern. The superintendent noted that most of the principals attend the school board meetings which is another vehicle for internal communications.

Newsletters are sent to all staff members after each school board meeting, but very little else is done with central office coordination. Communication with pupils and staff take place at the building level. The district does not publish handbooks for pupils concerning curriculum or rules and regulations. Each building is responsible for preparing information about registration, curriculum, activities, and facilities.

Information about district programs should be coordinated from the central office as a service to the school district. The literature in this area of public relations emphasizes this point. Little evidence was found to suggest that there is any student involvement above the building level. The superintendent regretfully acknowledged the

absence of central office coordination and pupil participation in the communications process. Consequently, internal communications in the district is weak and needs to be improved by providing more service and coordination from the central office.

The district does not have a newsletter which is sent to the community. As with internal communications, most of the process occurs at the building level in District VII. Parent-teacher organizations play an important role in the communication program. The superintendent meets on a regular basis with the Ministerial Association of the Village. The American Legion and the Rotary are active in the village and the superintendent stated that he was a member of both of these organizations.

One local newspaper covers events of interest in the district. The district does have access to a local radio station which is used for morning talk shows and special announcements. Television is not part of the external communications used by District VII.

The district is scheduled to have a referendum in the late spring of 1978. The superintendent expressed concern about the need to communicate the financial condition of the district to the community and the need to identify specific groups. The communication that is taking place in District VII lacks coordination and proper direction. The superintendent feels that the community is behind the

schools; however, should the referendum fail to pass, the district does not have a public relations program which can effectively deal with that situation.

#### Superintendent's Assessment - District VII

The superintendent stated that, "The community could be more informed. ...they don't understand what's happening, but they are satisfied with the school system in the community." The superintendent expressed a need for better public relations, but a general satisfaction with the amount of community support he feels he has in the district.

Little evidence was found to support the superintendent's viewpoint. The public relations program in the district falls far short of the criteria suggested in the literature, and the superintendent did not indicate that there were any plans to increase the coordination of the public relations program. Table VII indicates the general weakness of the public relations program. As was the case with District III, the superintendents comfortable feeling with his community and their support is not substantiated by periodic assessment tools such as questionnaires or surveys. The superintendent may base his assessment on informal feedback which he receives during the course of daily job responsibilities. Such a procedure can be extremely helpful, but misleading and dangerous if it is used as the sole means of assessment for the program. District VIII in the study employs a full-time principal to

coordinate all aspects of the program. While such an arrangement is not ideal, District VII could improve the quality of its program by centralizing the administration of the public relations program.

TABLE VIIDistrict VII Summary

		Pres.	Not Pres.	Not Det.
Written Policy Statement	X			
Cont. in Dist. Policy Manual	X			
Program Purpose in Policy	X			
Delg. of Auth. in Policy				X
P.R. Program Identified		X		
Full-Time Professional		X		
Reports to Superintendent		X		
Act. Member of Adm. Team		X		
Formal Planning		X		
Strategies Based on Ident. Needs		X		
Formal Program of Evaluation		X		
Two-way Comm. with Staff				X
Two-way Comm. with Pupils		X		
Two-way Comm. with S.B.	X			
Evidence of Grp. Part. with Staff		X		
Evidence of Grp. Part. with Pupils		X		
Specific Groups Identified		X		
Radio	X			
Newspaper	X			
Dissemination of Info. to Comm.	X			

### District VIII

District VIII is a kindergarten through twelfth grade district of about 6,300 students located some forty-five miles west of Chicago. The community spans either side of the Fox River which cuts through the village. The district's 262 teachers staff a new high school opened during the Fall of 1977, two junior high schools, and eight elementary schools. The district is one of the few districts in Kane County that has experienced significant enrollment increases during the past ten years. The district is currently making plans for the construction of school buildings in the near future to house the projected enrollment growth for the area.

### Public Relations Policy - District VIII

The district has several policy statements which pertain to the school-community relationship. One policy, entitled "Community Information" outlines program purpose and the proper delegation of authority for public relations activities.

The superintendent and his staff shall develop and implement a continuing flow of information designed to acquaint citizens of the community and the public generally with the problems, plans, the achievements, and the needs of the schools.

The superintendent delegates several responsibilities to the director of educational support services. The policy describes the role of the board of education as one of encouragement, discussion, and participation by the community in the promo-

tion of the best possible program of education.

A related policy describes the board of education's role in the public relations program.

The board of education shall keep the public informed of the school's policies and practices and provide opportunities for the public to make recommendations and express concerns regarding school operations.

District VIII policy outlines a specific program of public relations with delegation of authority described in the policy statement.

#### Public Relations Professional - District VIII

The district does not employ a public relations specialist to coordinate the program. One of the building principals is responsible for disseminating information to the community. Several of his job responsibilities are outlined in a policy: 1) news releases; 2) the publication of educational reports, and 3) the preparation and dissemination of parental and student guides and handbooks. A school board member assists in the writing of much of the information distributed. The superintendent estimated that the principal spent about 15% of his time on activities related to public relations. The public relations specialist performs several tasks which were described as facilitating and coordinating district communication, distributing information, and contacting people.

District VIII is large enough to employ a half-time public relations specialist; however, the superintendent feels

confident that the communication process is adequate with the current staffing arrangement. Tasks which would be assigned to a specialist are delegated to a number of people including the Assistant Superintendent for Business and the Assistant Superintendent for Personnel and Instruction. Most authors in the literature recommend a full-time public relations specialist. Most superintendents feel that such a person is too costly to the district. The superintendent of District VIII holds this viewpoint.

#### Program Planning & Evaluation - District VIII

The planning and evaluation process is informal in District VIII. Goals and objectives are defined with the administrative staff in May for the following year. While some of these goals may be related to public relations, there are no specific program goals and objectives as such which are created.

Evaluation is based upon feedback from a variety of sources. The school board, staff and citizen groups represent one source of feedback. District VIII also uses the census and survey techniques to gather information. Census information on the number of housing starts for example, can give the district information needed to anticipate future enrollment. The superintendent appeared puzzled by the question, "How do you evaluate the public relations program?" He asked for specific benchmarks to structure the question. The absence of such benchmarks



emphasizes the point that specific goals and objectives are needed for the program. The goals will provide the necessary benchmarks or structure needed to conduct an on-going program evaluation.

#### Internal & External Communication - District VIII

District VIII has a good program of internal communications. A newsletter is distributed to the staff on a weekly basis. In addition, the superintendent distributes a bulletin to all staff once a month when the payroll is distributed.

The central administration contributes to the internal communications process. The Assistant Superintendent for Business and the Assistant Superintendent for Personnel and Instruction meet regularly with the superintendent. Principals and the director of building and grounds are also included in the administrative group which meets with the superintendent. The school board and the staff contribute to the communications process by serving on district committees.

Inservice workshops are conducted with the administration for better public relations. Individual schools publish newsletters and bulletins as they are needed but these are not coordinated by the central office.

The internal communications program in District VIII is sound but could be improved with the addition of a public relations specialist to coordinate activities from the central office. The community is growing and changing rapidly,

but the superintendent is aware of this and is working towards improved communications.

The district has several policies in the district policy manual which pertain to the external communications program. Citizen's advisory committees are used by the board of education whenever they can be helpful. Citizens in the community are encouraged to serve in these advisory committees by making their interest known to the school board. Citizens are selected on the following bases:

- 1) interest in the school district; 2) qualifications with respect to the particular problem to be reviewed by the committee, and 3) availability for extended time and effort.

All board and committee meetings are open to the public unless there is an executive session. The public is invited to attend all school board meetings. Visitors such as parents and community residents are encouraged to visit the schools throughout the year.

A district newsletter is sent to the residents once each month. The superintendent stated that 12,000 copies are printed monthly. Parent-teacher organizations are active in the district and represented at each of the district's schools.

Inspection of the local newspaper indicated that the district receives a large amount of positive news coverage. The district had narrowly missed experiencing a teacher strike prior to the interview and the negotiations of the

school board with the teachers association were described in the newspaper each week. The district has access to a local radio station which covers school board meetings, athletic events, and allows the superintendent to communicate with the community whenever there is a need. Another policy states: "Members of the media shall be welcome at board and board committee meetings. The superintendent shall inform the news media of subjects for the agenda for the upcoming board meeting." District VIII meets the criteria for a good program of external communication. The superintendent is available to the public and despite the size of the district, there were no problems in scheduling a time to interview him.

#### Superintendent's Assessment - District VIII

The superintendent described the public relations program as having "peaks and valleys." The program is not done on a systematic basis as it should be. The program is strong in the areas of internal and external communications. Weaknesses of the program are: 1) lack of a public relations specialist; 2) the absence of specific goals and objectives which can be used to measure and evaluate feedback, and 3) lack of coordination of the public relations program. The last two points can only be satisfied if a specialist is hired to coordinate the program. The superintendent's assessment of the program is an accurate one, but does not

include the suggestion of a specialist or a coordinator to head the program. In the case of District VIII, the superintendent is a strong, public-relations-minded leader, who has successfully built schools and passed referendums in the district. Because of his success, he does feel comfortable with the current program in the district.

TABLE VIIIDistrict VIII Summary

	Pres.	Not Pres.	Not Det.
Written Policy Statement	X		
Cont. in Dist. Policy Manual	X		
Program Purpose in Policy	X		
Delg. of Auth. in Policy	X		
P.R. Program Identified		X	
Full-Time Professional		X	
Reports to Superintendent	X		
Act. Memb. of Adm. Team	X		
Formal Planning		X	
Strategies Based on Iden. Needs		X	
Formal Program of Evaluation		X	
Two-way Comm. with Staff	X		
Two-way Comm. with Pupils			X
Two-way Comm. with S.B.	X		
Evid. of Grp. Part. with Staff	X		
Evid. of Grp. Part. with Pupils			X
Specific Groups Identified	X		
Radio	X		
Newspapers	X		
Dissemination of Info. to Comm.	X		

### Budget Considerations

None of the districts studied identify funds for the public relations program; therefore, only rough estimates can be made. The amount of money spent for public relations suggests the importance which the school district attaches to the program. In almost every instance, the superintendents felt that more funds could be allocated for improved school-community relations; however, the significance of the data is not in what should be, but what actually is.

<u>DISTRICT</u>	<u>ENROLLMENT</u>	<u>BUDGET ALLOCATION</u>
I	10,100	\$15,000-\$20,000
II	10,000	\$5,000 printing & postage \$6,000-\$10,000 est. percentage of salaries
III	2,400	\$2,000 + printing & postage costs
IV	2,560	\$2,000 + printing & postage costs
V	25,600	\$30,000 total
VI	1,100	\$2,500 + printing & postage costs
VII	3,100	Information not avail.
VIII	6,300	Information not avail.

Only two districts employ public relations specialists, Districts I and V. In all other instances, estimates are based upon the percentage of time various personnel spend coordinating the public relations program. Coordination and direction usually emanates from the central office; there-

fore, the efforts of individual building personnel are not included in these estimates.

If a public relations program is to be effective, it must have central coordination which means that each district must hire and designate central office personnel to perform in this capacity. Most of the above districts are not doing this, and, as analysis of the data suggests, their programs are weakened.

District I has the strongest program in the study and if you divide the total enrollment by the allocated funds you get about \$2.00 per student. Comparing the figure with the other districts where figures were available one can see that the allocation of funds is comparable but can be increased in most instances by 50¢ to \$1.00 per student.

## CHAPTER IV

### COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS - PROGRAM QUALITY

Chapter IV contains an analysis of program quality of the districts public relations programs in the study. Program quality is presented in three sections: critical components, program strengths and weaknesses, and tendencies and pitfalls.

Each district is analyzed for the presence of critical components as presented in Table X. Six components are described as critical for a public relations program: a policy statement, a public relations professional, formal planning, formal evaluation, two-way communication, and the use of local media.

The second portion of the chapter discusses the relative strengths and weaknesses of each district. The final section of Chapter IV presents the idea of "critical point" and analyzes the implications for particular districts which have weak public relations programs.

A review of the literature has suggested that there are several components which must be considered as the foundation of a good public relations program. The components identified were: a written policy statement, the statement in the district policy manual, program purpose in the policy statement, delegation of authority in policy, public rela-



tions program identified, full-time professional reporting to the superintendent, active member of the administrative team, formal planning, a strategy based upon identified needs, formal program of evaluation, two-way communication with pupils, two-way communication with the school board, evidence of group participation of staff, evidence of group participation of pupils, specific groups identified, use of radio, newspapers, television and dissemination of information to the community. A presentation and analysis of these components has been discussed in Chapter 3. The analysis completed in Chapter 3 has been summarized in Table IX. The table suggests that there is a tendency for the districts in the study to emphasize specific facets of public relation.

The quality of the programs under consideration varies according to several factors: the presence or absence of "critical components," the amount of emphasis given public relations by the board of education and the central administration and characteristics which are peculiar to individual districts.

#### Critical Components

Several of the components in Chapter 3 and listed in Table IX would appear to be essential for a strong public relations program. The components each deal with a critical area of the public relations program and are, therefore, termed "critical components." Table X summarizes

the presence or absence of each of these critical components for all eight districts in the study.

Summarily, all eight districts were found to be lacking any program of formal planning or formal evaluation. In each case, the district superintendent felt that planning and evaluation were two aspects of the program which needed to be strengthened. The reasons for this absence of planning and evaluation are several.

In some cases, programs were so weak in other areas that planning and evaluation were simply not given a very high priority in terms of the public relations program. Districts which did possess strong programs as evidenced by the presence of critical components in all other areas, simply had not reached a level of expertise where they were ready to consider the components of planning and evaluation. Of all the components discussed, planning and evaluation are less visible and, perhaps, less measurable, than critical components such as the presence of a public relations professional, policy, communication, and media. Programs were able to function effectively without formal planning and evaluation as much of the planning and evaluation was done on an informal, daily basis. The problem with informal methods is that often districts are not able to actually determine how effective their programs are and what they specifically need to improve in order to develop stronger, more effective public relations.

TABLE IX  
 PERCENTAGE OF DISTRICTS POSSESSING  
 PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM COMPONENTS

	<u>Pres.</u>	<u>Not Pres.</u>	<u>Not Det.</u>
Written Policy Statement	62.5%	37.5%	- - -
Cont. in Dist. Policy Manual	62.5%	37.5%	- - -
Delg. of Auth. in Policy	37.5%	37.5%	25.0%
Program Purpose in Policy	50.0%	37.5%	12.5%
P.R. Program Identified	25.0%	75.0%	- - -
Full-Time Professional	25.0%	75.0%	- - -
Reports to Superintendent	62.5%	37.5%	- - -
Act. Member of Adm. Team	50.0%	50.0%	- - -
Formal Planning	- - -	100.0%	- - -
Strategy Based on Iden. Needs	12.5%	75.0%	12.5%
Formal Program of Evaluation	- - -	100.0%	- - -
Two-way Comm. with Staff	75.0%	- - -	25.0%
Two-way Comm. with Pupils	62.5%	12.5%	25.0%
Two-way Comm. with S.B.	100.0%	- - -	- - -
Evid. of Grp. Part. of Staff	87.5%	12.5%	- - -
Evid. of Grp. Part. of Pupils	50.0%	12.5%	37.5%
Specific Groups Identified	75.0%	25.0%	- - -
Use of Radio	75.0%	25.0%	- - -
Use of Newspaper	50.0%	50.0%	- - -
Use of-Television	- - -	100.0%	- - -
Dissemination of Information to Community	87.5%	12.5%	- - -

TABLE XPERCENTAGE OF DISTRICTS POSSESSING  
PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM CRITICAL COMPONENTS

Components	Pres.	Not Pres.	Not Det.
Policy Statement	62.5%	37.5%	- - -
P.R. Professional	25.0%	75.0%	- - -
Formal Planning	- - -	100.0%	- - -
Formal Evaluation	- - -	100.0%	- - -
Two-Way Communication	50.0%	50.0%	- - -
Media	50.0%	50.0%	- - -

TABLE XI

## DISTRICT SUMMARY OF CRITICAL COMPONENTS

Components	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
Policy Statement	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
P.R. Professional	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Formal Planning	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Formal Evaluation	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Two-way Communication	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Media	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes

All of the literature related to public relations programs describe programs which have written policy statements outlining the program. A majority of the districts in the study have such statements. Policy statements are important and contribute to a quality program to the extent that they describe the general philosophy and intent of the district regarding the type of program it purports to implement. Good programs begin with a sound policy statement. None of the districts in the study which were found to have strong programs, were without clear, concise policy statements. On the other hand, a well-constructed policy statement does not necessarily imply or insure that the district will have a program of high quality; that is, one which contains all or a majority of the critical components listed in Table X.

Despite the fact that most of the districts had policy statements, few of the superintendents considered the policies to be meaningful or functional. In fact, in several instances, superintendents were not sure whether or not they actually had policy governing the public relations program for the school district. As Table XI indicates, five of the eight districts in the study did have formal policy statements.

It should be noted that in every instance, districts which had policy statements which were functional and periodically updated, had programs which were more structured. Districts included here are I, II, V, and VIII. District VII had a policy statement but the superintendent did not consider

it significant as the actual program of public relations in the district was not based upon it.

Public relations professional is listed in Table X as a critical component and is, perhaps, the most visible component of any public relations program. Two of the eight districts in the study actually had personnel who performed duties of public relations apart from anything else they might do. In one case, an individual (assistant superintendent) was responsible for performing several functions related to public relations. However, such an arrangement does not place much emphasis on public relations and cannot really be considered a public relations "professional" in any sense of the word.

The presence of a full or part-time public relations professional is perhaps the most important single component of any quality program. Only two districts employed such a person, while none of the six remaining districts employed a professional either on a full or a part-time basis. Having a professional on duty does not insure a strong program, but, as is the case with policy statement, the absence of a public relations person makes it highly unlikely that a good program could be maintained.

In the two cases where full-time people were employed, it must be noted that these individuals performed tasks that simply could not have been accomplished effectively by another individual (such as an administrative assistant) or

even a part-time person. One of the most important functions of the public relations person in each case was traveling to each school in the district when newsworthy events were taking place. Such an arrangement demands an individual who has time and a flexible schedule so that good coverage of such events can be accomplished. If an individual has other duties which may, at times, take precedence over duties with a public relations purpose, the public relations program will be neglected, and, consequently, weakened. The factor of being available is one of the most important aspects of the job. Other responsibilities include attending meetings, dealing with the local media, writing, and printing public relations materials, and the general administration and supervision of the program. A strong program requires that these things be accomplished; and, therefore, implies the obvious necessity for an individual or individuals who can perform such tasks.

In one instance (District V), the staff professional, is assisted by two other individuals who complete much of the clerical work. Such an arrangement allows the professional to better utilize her expertise in the field. It should be noted that District V is the largest district in the study by a considerable margin. The size of the district demands that greater resources be expended for public relations in order to insure a good program. In the case of District V, such an effort is being made in the critical component area



of public relations professional.

The organization of staff for the public relations program can vary, depending upon the particular needs of the program; however, as has been emphasized, a quality program demands constant and, at times, immediate attention. In those districts where professional staff are not employed, superintendents may not be measuring advantages received for resources expended. The staff professional must be considered the pivotal component of the program, and, as demonstrated in two districts (I and V), the quality of the program increases significantly with the addition of such specialized staff.

Another critical component listed in Table X is two-way communication. As discussed, two-way communication includes the broad area of both internal or in-district communication and the external communication. Of the eight districts in the study, four of them were found to have effective two-way communication. Districts which had effective two-way communication placed more emphasis on the idea of good public relations than the four districts which did not have strong and effective communication channels. Evidence to support such a conclusion was found in the amount of material distributed, meetings held, and administrative time devoted to good communications.

The school districts that have developed good communication use various types of newsletters, surveys and information bulletins and support each one with the kind of feed-

back necessary to develop effective two-way communication. Feedback generally takes the form of annual surveys, citizen advisory committees, and ad hoc committees. As previously discussed, the most visible sign that a district desires a good public relations program is the amount of time devoted full-time to the endeavour as evidenced by a public relations professional on the staff.

Two districts maintain effective communication without an individual who can be termed a public relations specialist. In each case, communication is delegated to various personnel such as building principals and other central office staff. In the case of District II, the Assistant Superintendent administers the public relations program. Although not as effective as the arrangement in District I or District V, where full-time specialists are employed, District II operates a solid communication program through excellent district planning and organization. The quality of the entire program in District II is not as good as two other districts in the study; however, the communication component is more than adequate.

As with each of the other critical components found in Table X, the use of the local media is directly related to the amount of resources which each district designates for use in the public relations aspect of the entire district program. As was the case with communication, four of the eight districts in the study utilize the media available

to them in an effective manner. In each case, media includes local newspapers and local radio with the addition of whatever else may be available to the districts. None of the districts in the study made use of commercial television. Each of the four districts effectively using media are regularly covered by two or more local newspapers. In addition, local radio is used to cover sporting events and present question and answer or call-in programs for their respective communities.

The remaining four districts do not make good use of the media resources available to them and are therefore, considered weak in the media critical component. In each case, local newspapers and local radio are not periodically contacted. In fact, in one case, the superintendent did not feel that it was his responsibility to contact the local newspaper in order to have them present at regularly held school board meetings. The districts considered weak in media usage do not provide the impetus required to develop good media coverage. The media is expected to take the initiative in order to provide adequate news coverage. Such a "modus operandi" helps contribute to further weaken the public relations program.

#### Strengths and Weaknesses

Despite the fact that the literature does suggest that specific components be found in a public relations program, each program usually contains a variety of peculiar

characteristics which require that any statements concerning the programs relative strength or weakness take such characteristics into consideration. In most cases, however, a cursory glance at the components found in the program can give a very good indication of the quality of the program.

District I can be characterized as a strong program. As indicated, the district is one of only two districts found in the study that employs a full-time professional public relations person. With the exception of evaluation and planning, the program contains most of the components required in a good public relations program.

District I had recently passed several critical points in the administration of the program. Included were: the building and opening of a new high school and a new junior high school, changing attendance boundaries, and the successful passage of a tax rate referendum in the Education Fund of the district. The superintendent had been under a great deal of stress (he had had a severe heart attack) during this time, but had worked hard to successfully accomplish these goals.

Such projects brought the public relations program in the district into a central position. Consequently, measuring the strength of the public relations program in the district was not difficult. The impetus for the program was found to rest with the superintendent. Despite the fact that the public relations program was adequate, the superin-

tendent organized all his available resources at least one year before the three critical points were to be reached. Careful programs were devised with public relations playing the key role in each case.

With reference to the referendum which the district was able to pass, the superintendent recognized the vital role that public relations would play. The referendum was approached with careful planning and maximum effort on the part of everyone working in the district, especially those occupying the key positions such as the district administrators. Not only did the superintendent recognize the importance of public relations, but he successfully forecast the referendum as a critical time for the district. Often, when public relations programs are weak it is because of two reasons. Either the superintendent does not recognize the importance of public relations, or because of poor evaluation, the district does not recognize changing community opinions.

District I is considered to have a strong program because the leadership of the district recognized the importance of a good program of communication. Two-way communication was found at every level in the district, that is, administration to administration, administration to staff, staff to student body, and school to community.

The superintendent of District I believes in strong public relations and he has successfully organized a visible

program which will continue to function should the district come under new leadership in the future. Lines of authority are clearly drawn in the program, leaving no question as to the responsibilities of particular individuals. Such leadership gives the program in District I a strong rating when compared with other public relations programs in the survey.

District II has an adequate program of public relations, but the absence of a staff professional to direct the program prevents the program from being a strong one. The program has not been recently tested with a referendum or a crisis of another nature although the district has changed leadership three times in the last three years. Perhaps the one salient feature of the program is the outstanding organization which the district possesses. More emphasis, however, needs to be placed on the program by employing a public relations person either full-time or part-time. Although one individual was identified as directing public relations activities, none of his time is actually identified specifically for public relations related responsibilities.

The superintendent of District II did not consider the situation to be a problem. In fact, he suggested that such a program should be preferred over a program with a full-time public relations person. Although there may be some advantages to having a program organized without a staff professional, the literature does not recognize such a situation as ideal, and, consequently, the program in

District II can be characterized as good or adequate in that it meets most of the communication needs of the district; however, should an informational crisis such as a referendum appear in the near future, the program should not be relied upon to play an important role. It is suggested that the superintendent reorganize and reallocate the resources which he has at his disposal.

The program in District II was found to be weak, then in such critical areas as staffing (no public relations professional), formal planning, and formal evaluation. As described, all the districts in the study exhibited a lack of any type of planning and evaluation on a regular or consistent basis. District II has excellent organization, and could easily implement a program which would include periodic planning and evaluation of the communications program. As was true with staffing, the superintendent relies upon other resources to keep him informed as to the communications activities which take place in the district.

If the superintendent can react to an approaching critical period such as was done by the leadership in District I, the superintendent will be highly successful; however, as described, the framework in his communication program is simply not adequate. As with other districts, the superintendent may choose to prepare for a referendum with a separate campaign with a program of communication which is largely forgotten after the voting takes place. Such

action is often successful but can be dangerous for two reasons: 1) if the referendum fails, the communications program is usually inadequate (either the communications program was inadequate or, perhaps, the district did not need additional monies), or 2) the "instant" communications program is not formulated based upon past experiences with such a program; consequently, many plans are formulated with results which cannot be anticipated in the particular community.

District III did not have any of the critical components listed in Table XI. One of the major obstacles faced by the district was the large geographical area and community diversity found in the area. Community involvement does exist in the district, but the confidence which the superintendent expressed concerning community acceptance of the school district programs is suspect to the extent that no evidence was found to support such a conclusion. The superintendent indicated that there was a feeling of pride and togetherness in the community.

In analysis (Chapter III), several components of the public relations program were found to be present; however, as noted, none of the critical components were found in the district program. Perhaps the most significant danger in the program found is the fact that the central figure in the program, the superintendent, did not feel that the public relations program was significantly lacking in any particular



area. Such a feeling can be traced back to the false sense of security the superintendent expressed regarding community pride and participation.

In the case of District III, two things must be noted. First, the district is basically a farming community, and second, the district has yet to be severely tested by a crisis. In effect, the district has not undergone any significant changes since its inception although the described condition will change drastically during the next two decades. The community is about to change from rural to suburban and such a transition will bring with it an influx of community residents who may not possess the same confidence in the educational program which the present community does. In short, District III will be accountable to the residents in a fashion that they are not familiar with. The superintendent must anticipate such changes by placing more emphasis upon the public relations program. Currently, the program found in the district can only be assessed as weak and inadequate for the district.

The following features can be summarized as lending strength to the program: 1) adequate community involvement; 2) good participation in communication at all levels, administration to community, and 3) strong community organization considering that the district covers such a large area geographically, and actually encompasses several communities.

The district is prepared to face future changes as they may occur. As with most of the districts in the study,

public relations needs more emphasis. The superintendent feels comfortable with the kind of support the schools receive from the community; however, such a condition may change rapidly just prior to a referendum. As is the case in other programs, the key to improving the program can be found with the district's leadership and getting that leadership to recognize the important role that a communications specialist should play.

District IV was found to be lacking all of the critical components of a good program. The superintendent acknowledged the fact that the district does not possess a good public relations program. As with District III, the superintendent had developed a false sense of security regarding the perceptions of the community toward the school district. Consequently, public relations had not been significantly changed or improved during the tenure of the current superintendent. When a rate referendum in the district's Education Fund failed in 1976, the superintendent became painfully aware of the new forces in the community which were antagonistic and critical of the school district's program.

The shortcomings of the program in District IV center around the lack of available resources which were given to public relations. As with most districts, the district faced a severe financial crunch and had to cut programs for two consecutive years. Under such circumstances, it may appear difficult to justify increased funding for public

relations; however, due to the events of the past eighteen months, the leadership in the district must assess their current, weak program.

District leadership will often react to school board and community pressure and fail to communicate the needs of the district. District IV needed a comprehensive campaign to inform the residents of all of the facts which they needed in order to make a responsible decision in a referendum. As has been suggested, the district needs to strengthen several areas before it can have an adequate public relations program. Staff must be added to the central office and some of the communications responsibilities should be centralized there. Perhaps a saving factor that resulted from the district's difficulty to pass a referendum was the fact that the superintendent presently realizes the importance of public relations and the shortcomings of the district program.

District IV is doing many of the traditional things to communicate with the community (newsletters, meetings, etc.), but the district needs to commit itself to a quality program by addressing itself to the suggested critical components. Such an effort will require that more funds are spent in public relations.

District V has the most comprehensive program of public relations in the study. Such a fact can, to a great extent, be attributed to the size of the district. District

V is over two and one-half times larger than any other district in the study. It is not implied that the size of the district enables it to have a good program, but public relations in a district with a large enrollment becomes much more visible. The superintendent recognized the need for a comprehensive program and organized a program which appears to meet the needs of the district.

The only drawback found here was the absence of planning and evaluation. As described, none of the eight districts in the study were found to have formal planning or evaluation. A lack of planning and evaluation leave a great deal of room for program improvement; however, the program in District V can still be considered strong.

As the chief administrator in the district, the superintendent coordinates all programs. The superintendent does not actually involve himself in the daily operation of the public relations program. A staff of three individuals directs the district's public relations program. The size and diversity of the district demands that the resources of the district be carefully distributed.

District V's strong program can be found to be the result of several other key factors. The leadership in the district is very strong. The superintendent has delegated many important functions to his subordinates as should be done in a district of such size. A district as large as District V requires a chief administrator who is an excel-

lent organizer and is able to delegate responsibility.

As described above, the size of a district can also be an advantage in that the community may present resources that are simply not available in a smaller district. With larger size, also comes the necessity for a good communications program. The study does not show any definitive population cut-off point, but there appears to be such a figure, beyond which it is imperative that the district actually have an identifiable public relations program. Such a condition is in stark contrast to districts of smaller size which will rely upon informal and one-to-one methods to communicate. The study graphically illustrates such a point. The smaller districts have much more informal communication and evaluation than the larger districts. As was the case in District IV, informality can be extremely dangerous and misleading if it is now accompanied with a formal program of communication.

District VI is the smallest district in the study in terms of enrollment. Coupled with the fact that the district is basically rural and covers a large geographical area, District VI faces many of the same problems as District III. The district is due for rapid growth in the next ten years. Such growth will create new problems of public awareness which the district must be able to cope with.

The district currently has a weak public relations program as evidenced by the lack of critical program components. Perhaps even of more significance is the fact that

the superintendent does not apparently place a great deal of emphasis upon public relations. Such a conclusion can be supported by the fact that the superintendent did not indicate that program deficiencies would be strengthened in the near future.

Although the superintendent suggested that much of the public relations in the district is delegated to each building, investigation was not able to turn up any evidence to support such a statement. In fact, the superintendent appears to suffer from an attempt to wear "too many hats." In addition to his duties as chief school administrator for the district, the superintendent completes all business-related matters, and serves as personnel and instruction specialist for the district. Additional staff must be hired to improve the quality of the program in District VI.

District VI is also another example of a program where informality has not been replaced with formal programs of communication. In the case of District VI, the condition may become critical and fatal to the current superintendent. The data was not sufficient to provide adequate information to make a judgement as to the organizational abilities of the superintendent in the district; however, the central office appears poorly organized. Such a condition may be a result of the insufficient manpower in the central office already discussed.

The enrollment in the district is increasing, and

District VI will be having a building referendum in the near future. Unless some of the weaknesses in the communication program are aided, the district may not be able to communicate its needs to the community; thus resulting in the referendum failing.

District VII had, perhaps, the weakest program of the eight districts in the study. The superintendent in the district accurately assessed the shortcomings of public relations activities; however, he gave no indication that plans were being formulated to strengthen public relations.

The district office has very little staff to help the superintendent. Consequently, most of the public relations activities are delegated to the building administrators in the district. Because most duties are delegated, there is a lack of coordination and centralization in the program.

The district has undergone changes recently such as an increase in enrollment, and the superintendent stated that the financial picture required that the district seek increased funding through a referendum in the near future. Currently, there are no programs related to public relations to effectively communicate the needs of the district to the community. The superintendent is taking a calculated risk by approaching the referendum without adequate public relations. If the referendum fails, public confidence in the district leadership will be undermined, thus making it extremely difficult for the district to pass a second referen-

dum. Because of the poor public relations program, the district is simply not prepared to face such a situation.

District VII needs to strengthen the program in every component phase. As with District IV, lack of adequate resources and staff appears to be the most glaring weakness of program quality. In addition, the superintendent needs to develop specific program goals and objectives through clear and concise policy statements constructed with the approval and support of the board of education. If these things are not done, District VII may face serious consequences in the near future.

The superintendent in the district may not be willing to spend additional money to improve the communications program and increase the efficiency of the central office staff. Budget information was not available regarding the public relations program; however, the data strongly suggests that insufficient funds are allocated for district communications.

The last district to be discussed, District VIII, possesses what can best be described as an adequate program of public relations. The district maintains good two-way communication; however, besides lacking any formal planning or evaluation, the program does not have a staff professional to coordinate the program.

There is no doubt that the superintendent in District VIII is the driving force behind all activities related to public relations. Despite the moderate size of the district



(6,300 students), the superintendent described himself as being involved in most public relations activities. As was the case in several other districts, the specific responsibilities are delegated to building administrators. Delegation of responsibilities does not supplant a staff professional; however, the program was well-coordinated by the superintendent and his assistants as evidenced by their various job responsibilities.

An item which strengthened the program considerably was the fact that the superintendent worked closely with the local media, being very careful to present a sound and responsible picture of the district to the local community. News clippings from the local papers supported the findings. Should District VIII employ a staff professional for public relations, the district would boast a strong program under good leadership which is already present.

District VIII presents a strong argument for employing already existing personnel to function as communications specialists on a part-time basis. The district has a strong program without employing a specialist. It would appear that such a program can be very successful if there is good organization and strong, concerned leadership in the district. While certainly not ideal, the superintendent has simply chosen other ways in which to organize the communications program.

### Tendencies and Pitfalls

In several instances described in the study, a reference has been made to a critical period or a "critical point." For purpose of discussion, "critical point" refers to a point in time where the outcome of particular events may have a crucial bearing on the future of a district program. The critical point usually occurs just prior to or during rapid change as an educationally traumatic event such as school closings, budget reductions, and the passage of local tax referenda. Once the critical point is reached in time, the chances of district leadership, as evidenced by district programs, to have a significant effect upon local events decreases significantly.

The public relations program usually plays a central role in the process of informing community residents prior to a critical point, once the district leadership has made an important recommendation. In several instances, reference has been made of the failure of particular districts to adequately prepare for "critical points" by organizing solid programs of communication.

The problem appears to be that public relations appears to receive a rather low priority in most districts. The reasons for the situation are not clear. Perhaps, good public relations appears to be too simple or trivial to spend much time on. Surely, good public relations requires, above all else, individual dedication as evidenced by the adequate

allocation of resources and funds.

As districts approach critical points in their growth and evaluation, a large portion of their success or failure will depend upon the recognition by the district leadership of the significance of effective public relations. Gaining the confidence of the local residents requires good public relations over an extended period of time. Good results cannot be achieved over a period of several months. Districts that wait until the time of decision will have waited too long. Their success or failure will be left up to the image already there. There will be no time to change the image - to effectively inform.

Several examples can be found in the study which describe the idea of "critical point." District IV has been described as having a weak program of public relations as evidenced by the lack of program resources and components suggested by the literature. The district recently faced budget deficits which made it imperative that increased local funding be sought through a tax referendum.

The superintendent indicated that the community had always been very conservative and supportive of the school district. However, slowly, during the last decade some subtle changes took place. First, the make-up of the residents changed. Some of the "old-guard" left and was replaced with younger families with different backgrounds. Second, the district began to slowly lose enrollment. The decrease in enrollment was to eventually be the major factor in seek-

ing increased funding. Leadership in the district was simply not aware that the new residents felt any different than the traditional residents. There had been some signs, such as new, more vocal board members, but the superintendent stated that he was simply not prepared for what would take place.

The first referendum failed by a substantial margin. There was a great deal of publicity generated by the referendum, both immediately before, and after the voting took place. Another referendum was held and it failed by a similar substantial margin of votes. The superintendent was not ready for such a series of events. Public relations in the district was never emphasized and with the approach of the time of crisis in the district, there was simply no reasonable alternative available to effectively deal with the situation. Had the superintendent been aware of the community's sentiments two years before the referendum, he could have taken steps through public relations to remedy the situation.

District VII shows many of the same inherent problems that District IV had two years ago. District VII has undergone some change in the resident make-up. The superintendent predicts a tax referendum effort in the near future and has confidence that the referendum will pass. The problem here is that because of such poor feedback in the public relations program the superintendent has no real evidence to support his apparent confidence in the future community sup-

port. In addition, as was the case with District IV, no plans are currently being formulated to increase community participation and community awareness of the school district. The traditional methods of presenting a referendum may not be successful here for the very same reasons that they were not in the case of District IV.

The idea of critical point is presented here to emphasize the need for an on-going program of public relations which is given a priority in the district's overall program sufficient enough to accomplish what one of its major objectives should be: that is effective two-way communication with staff, students, and community. The danger when dealing with a critical point is that the pitfalls are often not visible. The leadership of the district must take the initiative to determine how the community perceives the school program as opposed to relying on dangerous assumptions which are often formulated upon the basis of what is heard from a vocal minority.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Several conclusions to the study should be noted. These conclusions are based solely upon the evidence found and used in the study and do not, necessarily, reflect the opinions of any particular individual. In addition, the conclusions apply only to the data gathered for the study reported.

- 1) The quality of the programs in the study varied to a great extent.
- 2) Districts did not place a great deal of emphasis upon public relations.
- 3) The problem of staffing a public relations program needs to be addressed and is currently not being done.
- 4) No evidence of formal planning or program evaluation was found in any of the eight districts in the study.
- 5) Most districts effectively use the local media which is available to them.
- 6) Good two-way communication was found in most districts.
- 7) In each district the one individual responsible for the implementation of adequate public relations was the chief school officer, the superintendent.

Quality variance was largely the result of three factors: district size, public relations emphasis, and support

for the program emanating from the superintendent's office. The size of the district dictates, to a great extent, the amount of resources available to distribute, thus making their programs appear stronger. Realizing that the resources of the program are relative to the size of the district, the study has attempted to make some qualitative judgements as to the programs found in the districts included in the study.

Evidence to substantiate a lack of emphasis upon public relations can be found in the form of inadequate facilities and a lack of sufficient staffing for public relations. In each case, leadership for district programs emanated from the office of the superintendent. The lack of strong public relations must, therefore, be traced to that office.

In all but two instances, districts did not employ staff professionals (full or part-time) to coordinate public relations activities. Superintendents simply felt that such an individual should not be given a high priority. The literature suggests the need for a specialist and the findings of the study support such a recommendation. Even part-time or clerical help would substantially improve a program which leaves such responsibilities to staff members who, because of other duties do not have the time to direct their attention to the seemingly mundane and simple task of clear, daily communication.

Of the critical components described in the study,

planning and evaluation would be the easiest to implement. Both of these require that the district leadership works closely with the local board of education in formulating goals and objectives and sound district policy. The logical sequence for a program would suggest that planning precede the formulation of the program; however, in actual practice, both planning and evaluation could be easily implemented after the program was already in progress.

The use of local radio and newspapers was found in each of the districts in the study. It should be noted that larger districts usually will have more media at their disposal, thus increasing the problem of effectively using all of it.

Successful administrators are usually good communicators and good communication contributes immensely to public relations. There is probably more pressure placed upon a district program to maintain good two-way communication than to implement any other single phase of public relations. More importantly, the negative consequences of a failure in this area of communication are usually swift, visible, and embarrassing in the form of bad press relations or intensified conflict with vocal minority groups.

Without the support and leadership of the superintendent, the program is doomed to failure despite the good intentions of any other individual in the district administration. The inference in placing the responsibility with the



superintendent, here is that a good program needs strong, capable leadership. The expertise of the superintendent in the field of public relations may be lacking which implies the need for adequate training and preparation.

The data gathered for the study did not reveal any previously unknown factors which would influence a public relations program. Good public relations involves, to a great extent, the simple application of time, effort, and resources. Most school people are aware of the answers but are not willing to implement strong programs. Part of the reason for this may be that educators feel that communication to the public is somehow not related to traditional education and is, therefore, unnecessary. While that philosophy may have been true to some extent in the past, it is not true today. As a general rule, the public support to local education without first being shown that the people who are educating their children are toiling under a methodology and a philosophy which is clearly accountable to them, both in financial terms and in terms of measurable educational results.

The study did show graphically that superintendents cannot recognize danger signals of a weak program because they: 1) do not have adequate evaluation and program planning; 2) place too much confidence in their own ability to somehow overcome these problems and 3) feel a false sense of security in their relationship with the local community.

Districts are simply not ready to deal with rapid community change; that is, they cannot adopt. To a large degree, the condition exists because educators were not asked to adopt in the past. Traditional programs of communication are often insincere, inflexible, and inadequate.

Educators are not willing to tell the community that there are problems or that they do not have all the answers necessary to educate the community's children. Often, the philosophy is "don't tell the community anything," rather than an honest open-door policy of communication.

#### Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

- 1) The need for increased allocations to public relations in the form of funds for expanded staff and facilities.
- 2) Staff should be given adequate training in public relations.
- 3) Long-range planning should be used to implement programs more effectively.
- 4) Districts should place a higher priority on staffing a program with a public relations specialist.
- 5) Evaluation and measuring devices should be developed to measure the effectiveness of the two-way communication in the district.
- 6) Schools should attempt to emulate successful public relations procedures which can be found in business and industry.

With respect to funding, none of the districts in the study are spending enough money to conduct an outstanding or model program. In several cases a simple re-distribution of funds already present would be advantageous. Such action would require districts to re-evaluate their future priorities, placing more emphasis upon public relations.

Such training should take place in two forms. One, administrators and individuals staffed as public relations specialists need more training in the field. The obvious source for such training is industry. The help and expertise is already there. There are no "knowledge gaps" to bridge or research. Educators only have to utilize this valuable resource. Future formal programs in educational administration should include public relations. Institutions of higher learning should seek out faculty members who have experience in this area and hire these individuals to fill the need here. Administrators must also take the initiative and actually solicit help from qualified sources.

Second, district staff should be given more inservice education in the area of public relations. Again, outside sources for speakers and experts should be utilized. Communication is not enough. Staff should be told how, when, where and why to communicate. In order to do this, administration should develop clear and concise goals and objectives which each staff member can follow and strive to accomplish. There should be sufficient follow-up and periodic evaluation.

and feedback.

A good program takes at least two full years to develop and effectively implement. Districts need to take this into consideration when planning for a "critical point" such as tax referenda. It takes time to develop public trust, or to change existing community attitudes to more desirable ones. Further studies are needed in the field to substantiate the mistakes that are being made so that they are not repeated elsewhere.

The obvious problem in hiring additional staff to direct or coordinate a program is funding; however, most districts do not understand what is needed in terms of a specialist. A specialist does not have to be a top-salaried administrator, but rather someone with a background in public relations activities such as publishing, writing, and other communication skills. The specialist should demonstrate ability to organize and plan. In only two cases in the study (District I and District V) were specialists employed. In each case, only modest salaries were required to employ a highly qualified individual. In addition, a specialist need not be an individual with exclusive training in education. The only requirement here should be that such an individual know and understand the various educational program of the employing district.

Evaluation and program planning has been discussed several times in the study as having been totally lacking

from all of the programs in the study. Districts need to develop a formal method of planning and evaluating public relations programs at least once each year. The program should involve staff and community in planning. Evaluation should use a variety of techniques to measure program effectiveness. The most important point here is that evaluation be done on a consistent basis and that the program is designed to actually present different components for evaluation. To just ask general questions is not sufficient evaluation methodology. The program should be divided into several areas such as the study here has been (staff, policy, internal and external communication) and evaluation should consider each area individually. Community as well as staff must be involved in evaluation. Intensive evaluation can be done through committee work, but even general questionnaires can and should be used each year.

There are no complex program designs which are yet to be uncovered in public relations. School personnel can learn a great deal from current practices in business and industry. It must be noted that educators are not asking the public to buy a particular product, only understand and support it. As long as education is funded by the general public, it will be the responsibility of school people to communicate program, problems, and concerns to the public.

Future studies must consider both the uniqueness of each case and the similarities of one case to another.

Parallels should be drawn showing why some public relations programs are successful while others are doomed to failure. The answers to such questions may not be complex, but they will require a great deal of further research in the field.

The budget is another area which can be studied in the future. The budget as it relates to communications expenditures needs to be given a higher priority. In every instance in the study, the budget did not identify funds for a communications program; rather, monies are usually found included in accounts intended for various things. Also, more money should be spent on public relations. Future studies should attempt to find out how much money is actually spent on programs, and how much should be spent to improve programs.

A theoretical framework could be developed by future studies to show the dynamics of communications in education. The critical point concept could be used as a central point in the construct. Most of the literature on public relations is pragmatic and lacks any theoretical application.

Future studies should attempt to isolate the elements of successful programs and show how the elements contribute to the program. Such studies can show how the elements affect each other in a dynamic fashion. Any theory of public relations would have to be presented within a dynamic theoretical construct.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX I

The following districts, located in Kane County, Illinois, participated in the study:

Aurora East Unit School District #131

Aurora West Unit School District #129

Batavia Unit School District #101

St. Charles Community Unit School District #303

Elgin Unit School District #46

Geneva Community Unit School District #304

Kaneland Community Unit School District #302

Central Community Unit School District #301

## APPENDIX II

Questionnaire used in each interview:

Purposes of the Public Relations Program

1. Does your district have a written policy statement with respect to its public relations program? If not, why not?
2. Is this policy school board approved policy, contained in the district's regular policy manual?
3. Does the policy statement express the purpose of the public relations program?
4. Does the policy statement provide for the proper delegation of authority so as to achieve the objectives of the program?
5. How is the policy communicated to the staff?

Provision for Public Relations Professional in the Organization

1. Does the district have a unit or a program which clearly has as its purpose public relations?
2. Who is in charge of the public relations program?
3. How much time does this person devote to public relations?
4. Is the person in charge of public relations directly responsible to the chief executive of the organization?
5. Is this individual an active member of the administrative team?

Provision for Adequate Resources for the Public Relations Program

1. Is there sufficient staff to accomplish the objectives of the public relations program?
2. Does professional staffing meet the minimum standards as set by the National School Public Relations Association?

One or more for up to 24,999 pupils

Two or more for 25,000 to 49,999 pupils

Three or more for 50,000 to 99,999 pupils

Five or more for 100,000 and over

3. Does your district budget funds which can be identified as earmarked for the public relations program?  
Specifically,
  - a. How much money is allocated for materials and equipment?
  - b. For facilities?
  - c. For technical services such as publications, advertising, audiovisual, radio, television, etc.?
  - d. For professional growth activities?
  - e. For research and evaluation (such as surveys)?
  - f. For development of factual information (such as census)?
4. Does your district maintain a research program which provides information about curriculum, finance, construction, legislation, innovations, staffing, population trends, public opinion, and other areas?
5. How is the public relations program related to the research program?
  - a. Does the public relations program have access to all research information?
  - b. Does the public relations program have authority to initiate or suggest pertinent research studies?

#### Provision For Internal Communications

1. Have you identified specific individuals and groups within the district which require continuous communications?
2. Are there procedures for determining what kind of information should be supplied to staff?
3. What kinds of media are used to communicate to staff?
4. Is there a process for encouraging, receiving, analyzing, and utilizing feedback?
5. Is there provision for inservice training for the entire staff in school public relations?

#### Provision For External Communications

1. Have you identified specific individuals and groups within the district (community) which require continuous com-

munication?

2. Have procedures been established which will determine what kind of information is supplied to the community, with particular interest on the degree of public interest?
3. Which media (including mass media) are utilized in this communications process?
4. How is feedback received, analyzed and utilized?
5. Have the human resources of the community been identified (especially community organizations)?
6. How are these resources utilized?

#### Provision for Evaluation of the Public Relations Program

1. Is provision made for evaluation of the program?
2. Who is included in the evaluation process?
3. Is the process an on-going one?

#### Provision for Long-Range Planning

1. Is there long-range planning with respect to the public relations program?
2. Is provision made for developing new and different avenues of communications and relationships?

#### Related Data:

1. Enrollment of the district
  2. Number of full-time faculty
  3. Number and grade level of schools
  4. Results of referendums during the recent past (last 10 yr)
  5. Are seats on the school board contested in elections?
- Examples
6. Is there a teacher association?
  7. What is the general relationship between the teacher association and the school board and its administration?
  8. How well are regular school board meetings attended?
  9. Does the district make use of polls or surveys?

## ABSTRACT

The study attempted to show the current status of public relations programs in Kane County, Illinois, in reference to relative strengths and weaknesses and general comparisons where appropriate in analysis.

The study isolated several key components of a good public relations program by using suggested guidelines from the National School Public Relations Association and elements found commonly in the literature which deal with school public relations. Current public relations programs in the school district of Kane County, Illinois, were analyzed with respect to the established criteria. The criteria used in analysis were general enough to permit a qualitative rather than a quantitative study; however, in some cases, objective analysis of statistical data such as district enrollment and the presence or absence of key program components was completed.

The author conducted interviews with the superintendents of each of the eight districts in the study. Data obtained in response to interview questions, as well as data gathered from such sources as district handbooks and established district policy were then used in analysis.

The study reached the following conclusions: 1) the quality of the programs in the study varied to a great extent; 2) districts did not place a great deal of emphasis upon public relations; 3) the problem of staffing a public

relations program needs to be addressed and, in general, is not being done; 4) no evidence of formal planning or program evaluation was found in any of the eight districts in the study; 5) most districts effectively use the local media which is available to them; 6) good two-way communication was found in most districts and 7) in each district the one individual responsible for the implementation of adequate public relations was the chief school officer, the superintendent.

Districts need to place a higher priority upon communicating with the community. Long-range planning which takes advantage of sound business practices in public relations needs to be implemented. In general, school officials need to place more emphasis upon sound practices of two-way communication. Solutions to such problems are often obvious; however, many school officials are not able to recognize an inadequate communications program as a potential dangerous problem.

## APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Jeffrey Michael Gruber has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Education.

The final copies have been examined by the Director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The dissertation is, therefore, accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education.

May 1, 1978  
Date

Michael  
Signature of Advisor